Commentary

Volume Sixty-two, Number Three, September 1976

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A Symposium

WHAT IS A LIBERAL— WHO IS A CONSERVATIVE?

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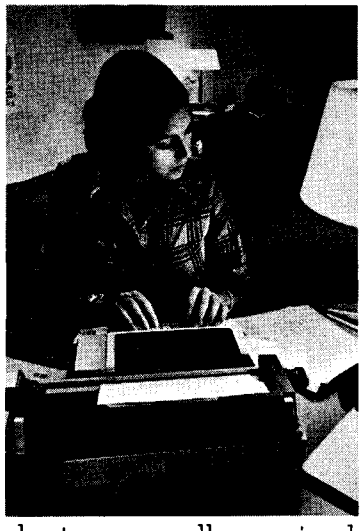

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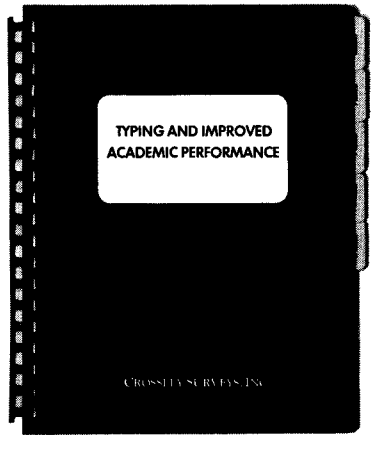

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Commentary

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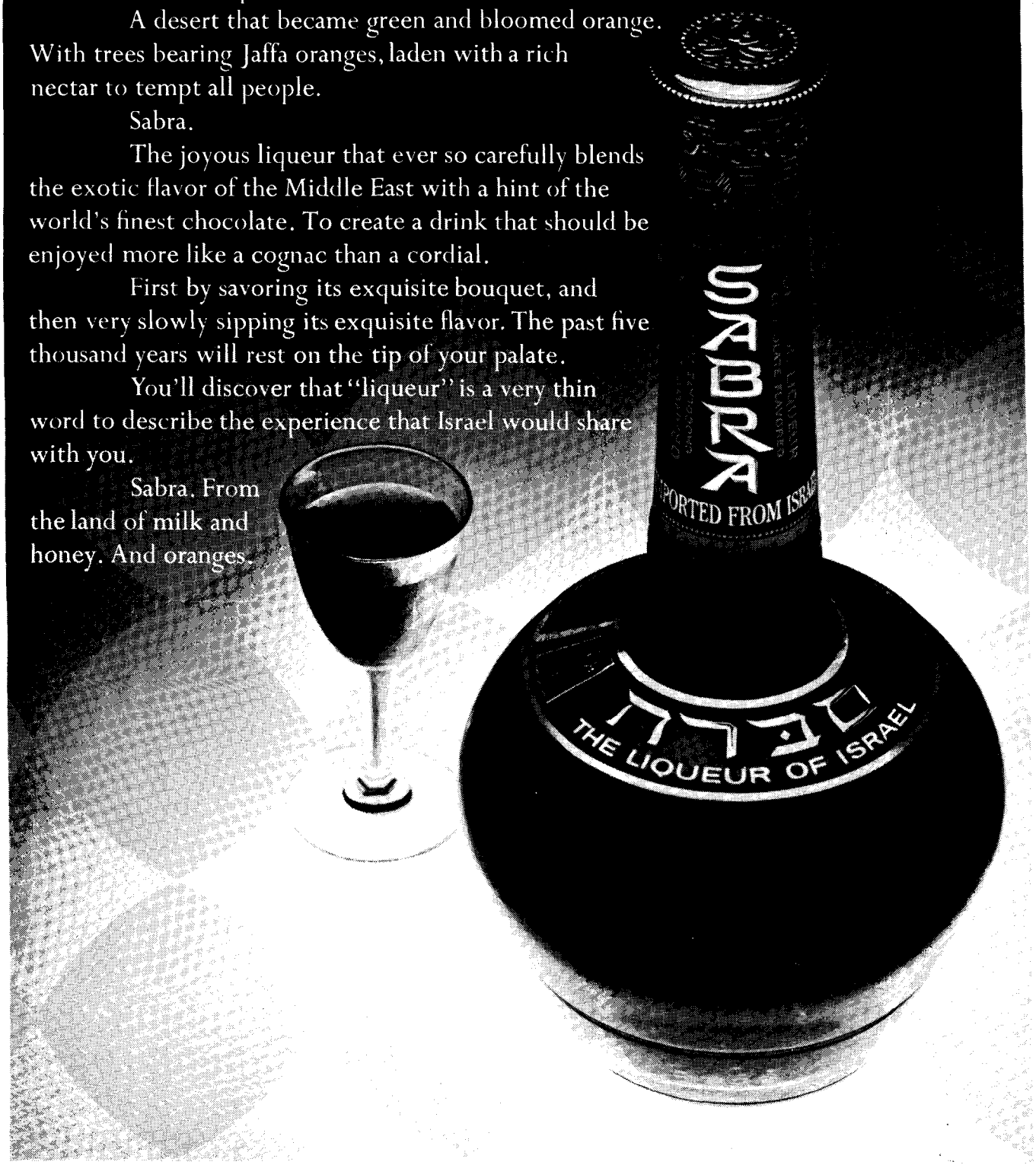

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Letters from Readers

The 50's and Beyond

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Despite the sound case Nathan Glazer makes for Lillian Hellman's political irresponsibility in "An Answer to Lillian Hellman" [June], he exaggerates the menace Communist conspiracies posed in the war years and after. And he ignores the larger truth implicit in Lillian Hellman's gutsy stand: whatever naiveté or personal ethics may have contributed to her refusal to name names, her very refusal to do so sparked the beginning of the end to the witch hunt of the 50's. And that witch hunt did more harm to the political and intellectual life of the United States than all the political conspiracies (real or imaginary) from Aaron Burr to the Zimmerman note and the Rosenbergs.

I am a member of the silent generation, that college group which passed through the academy in the 50's and had nothing to say once they were out; their silence was the natural result of the silence of their professors, parents, and political representatives. The moratorium on free discussion of political and social thought was absolute in the McCarthy years. Everyone was scared to death. We got used to keeping silent, and who can deny that the mindless radicalism of the 60's (not to mention, as Miss Hellman does, Vietnam and Watergate) is partly the result of the political atrophy directly attributable to those years?

PETER A. BRIER
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . One needn't approve of Soviet policies, internal or external, to disapprove of McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee. Miss Hellman may skirt issues and moral alternatives of compelling importance, but so does Nathan Glazer. For example, was being a member of the Communist party really illegal? Did the congressional committee really want to investigate the dangers presented by domestic Communists or did it seek to stifle dissent and earn notice for its own members? Did being an American Communist necessarily mean that one would follow blindly the dictate of Russian Communists? Is it just barely possible that the committee itself was acting in an unconstitutional manner by inquiring into the beliefs of private citizens, and by attempting to force witnesses to testify about the personal political allegiance of others? If Senator McCarthy's motives were so pure, why did he find it necessary to lie, to distort, to falsify?

To say that the Soviet Union is a totalitarian state, that it routinely imprisons, tortures, even kills its own domestic opponents, is to beg the question. This country is a paradise in comparison. While I have no direct knowledge, I suppose that Greece and Turkey are both infinitely preferable to the USSR. But that does not make "telling the truth" to the House Un-American Activities Committee a noble deed. In all honesty, what did the investigations accomplish except the financial ruin and emotional destruction of a group of American citizens? Is the threat of a fifth column of American Communists lessened by the committee's findings?

I am not entirely certain how absolute is my conviction that freedom of speech and freedom of thought are inviolable in the United States. I am certain that the McCarthy era attempted to suppress both, in the *name* of protecting us from danger. The Soviet Union continues its ruthless repression today. Must we follow suit?

BETTY KROLL
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Nathan Glazer states the question clearly concerning *Partisan Review* "intellectuals" and their silence during the McCarthy years. However, if he or COMMENTARY accepts lists of Communist sins, blasts at Garry Wills, and "druthers" about Lillian Hellman's political behavior as an answer, I do not.

By now it should be clear that McCarthy and McCarthyism had little to do with "getting" Communists. McCarthy was after people who read *Partisan Review* and COMMENTARY, people like you and me; he got some, too! The writers for *Partisan Review* didn't seem to write very much about this in the *Partisan Review* of those years. As for COMMENTARY, my subscription began in 1956 and I have no means here to scan through issues prior to the Army-McCarthy Hearings.

The claim that the evils of McCarthyism were so obvious that dis-

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cussions of the surrounding political and social conditions, including the reality of Communist infiltration, etc., were what was needed won't wash. That excuse smacks too much of the self-justifiications of those who "explain" anti-Semitism by pointing to such "realities" as the social conditions which supposedly produce "bad" Jews.

The McCarthy years prior to the Army-McCarthy Hearings remain as good a test of intellectual integrity as the Hitler-Stalin pact or, say, the Spanish Civil War for differing reasons for different intellectuals. Lillian Hellman may or may not deserve a better answer, but readers of COMMENTARY should expect COMMENTARY to face up to this issue now that Nathan Glazer has run away from it.

ANDREW E. WESSEL
Munich, West Germany

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In conection with Nathan Glazer's article on Lillian Hellman, I would like to point out the following.

The Soviet-sponsored "peace movement" of 1948-52 was designed as a smoke screen to obscure the resumption of Stalin's war against his own people that had subsided after the Great Purges. Lillian Hellman had joined other American intellectuals in signing letters in the *Daily Worker* supporting the purge trials of the late 30's which had condemned millions of innocent people to the Gulag, and decimated the liberal intelligentsia. Some of these enthusiasts of the purges later declared they had had no knowledge of the carnage. But in 1949, at the time of the Waldorf Cultural and Scientific Congress for World Peace, scarcely anyone who could read and write could ignore the war against mind and body that was being conducted in the USSR. On the cultural and scientific front alone, the following events had been widely reported in the Soviet and Western press:

• The massive campaign against the Soviet artistic intelligentsia—the so-called Zhdanov purges of 1946-48. Hardly any of the survivors of the 30's in literature, drama, cinema, and music escaped the violent abuse that flowed from the Soviet Central Committee into the Soviet press. Among the principal persecutors of Akhmatova, Zoshchenko, and Pasternak was Alexander Fadeyev, president of the Soviet Writers Union and chief of the Russian delegation at the Waldorf Congress.

• The destruction of the biological sciences in the Soviet Union by Stalin's creature, Trofim Lysenko. This was the heyday of that charlatan agronomist. Triumphing in 1948, Lysenko and his followers conducted a mass purge of Soviet biologists who did not support the absurd, supposedly Marxist, notion that heritable changes can be brought about by environmental influences.

• The destruction of Yiddish cultural life in the USSR in 1948-49. With the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, Stalin embarked on the first openly anti-Semitic campaign in Soviet history, culminating in the execution of major Jewish writers and the "Doctors' Plot" in 1952. Ilya Ehrenburg, a familiar figure at the "peace congresses" of the period, had heralded the campaign in his famous 1948 *Pravda* article denying the existence of a Jewish people and condemning Israel as a bourgeois state and a tool of Anglo-American imperialism. By the time of the Waldorf Congress the following had occurred: the arrest of Peretz Markish and other well-known Jewish writers; the closing of the Jewish state theater; the dissolution of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee; the suppression of all Jewish newspapers, periodicals, and publishing houses in the USSR.

IT IS against this historical background that the various Communist-sponsored peace congresses (Vroslav, Paris, Prague, Stockholm, Vienna, Warsaw, and New York) took place. Miss Hellman was a charter member of the organizing committee for the Waldorf Congress and a principal speaker. She has been quoted as saying: "We want to declare that there are still men and women in the world who do not think it dangerous or radical to declare themselves for the continuation of life. . . . We place ourselves among those who wish to live, think, and breathe, to eat and play and raise their children." Though apparently unexceptionable, it is still worth noting how this sort of language sounded to those who also wished to live, think, breathe, eat, etc. on the other side of the barbed wire in 1949. For so far-ranging and high-pitched was Soviet transmission of the goings-on at the Waldorf and similar congresses that they became known even in the remotest corners of Stalin's vast complex of concentration camps. In the just-published third volume of *The Gulag Archipelago* Solzhenitsyn writes how news of the peace congresses reached the camps of Northern Kazakhstan, where he was a prisoner, just as two slave laborers in the mines made an ill-fated escape attempt. Fleeing by night across the parched steppe, the prisoners were close to death from thirst and exhaustion. They came upon a horse, killed it, then drank its blood directly from the flowing wound.

Solzhenitsyn continues: "Partisans of peace! That year you were meeting noisily in Vienna or in Stockholm, sipping your drinks through straws." Referring to two veteran participants of the congresses, he writes: "Didn't it enter your heads that the countrymen of the versifier Tikhonov and the journalist Ehrenburg were sucking on the cadavers of horses? Wasn't it explained to you that in the Soviet Union *that* is what is meant by peace?"

ROY ALEXANDER
New York City

NATHAN GLAZER writes:

I want to remind my critics that in my article on *Scoundrel Time* I did not make an estimate as to the seriousness of the internal Communist danger, but rather pointed out that the NAACP and the CIO—I might have added the ADA—all thought it was serious indeed, and that whatever Lillian Hellman thought, her responsibility as a writer and an intellectual was to contribute to this discussion from her special sources of knowledge. After all, not everyone could arrange a private meeting with the leaders of the Communist party on the question of Communist influence in Henry Wallace's Progressive party.

Independently of the actual *danger* of internal Communism, there is a moral question involved. To draw a parallel: the fact that native Nazis were without power in this country did not diminish the outrage which people felt toward those who supported Hitler or would defend him. This is, again, not to justify depriving such people of freedom of speech or of jobs in government or the media or in teaching, but simply to note why some public response to the support of Nazism was felt by many to be necessary.

One cannot judge the public response to Communism only by

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making a pragmatic analysis of the real dangers it posed: the public, and Congress, often demanded, and properly so, that just as the nation and its leaders should defend democracy and freedom, they should condemn totalitarian dictatorship. While this does not settle the question of what form such condemnation should have taken, whatever form it took would have had unhappy consequences for persons identified as holding the condemned views.

These letters suggest to me that it is important to have, now, in the 70's, as objective an analysis as can be managed of what really happened in the 50's, who was hurt, and how, and what impact anti-Communism had on the free expression of opinion. For instance, to answer Andrew E. Wessel, although I did not bother to list them, there were many articles run in COMMENTARY, *Partisan Review*, and elsewhere that were critical of Senator McCarthy, including my own "The Method of Senator McCarthy" [*March 1953*], which I am happy to see, now that the early 50's are being restudied, is now and again reprinted. But the question of a "test of historical integrity" is rarely as simple as Mr. Wessel supposes. What was the test, for example, in the Spanish Civil War? Did those who concealed the Communist control of the international volunteer program pass it? Did those who exposed it fail? Again: was the "silent generation" silent, as Peter A. Brier would have it, because of a McCarthy-induced "absolute . . . moratorium on free discussion of political and social thought . . ." when "everyone was scared to death"? That is not the way I recall it, nor do contemporary accounts and studies of the silent generation place much weight on political intimidation. Our very different perceptions undoubtedly reflect where we were placed at the time, whom we spoke with, our political attitudes, and so on. There were good contemporary analyses and empirical researches (e.g., Paul Lazarsfeld's and David Reisman's studies of the views and responses of college and university faculty members), and we have a good deal of revisionist research on specific issues. Is it not possible for someone to conduct a new and politically unbiased study of this period, focusing on what the real effects were on the climate of speech, discussion, and teaching?

Writers and Critics

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY

The light-years distance betwee a cultural critic and an imagin tive writer is made most explicit i Ruth R. Wisse's argument that "fc those who take Judaism seriousl as a cultural alternative, and wis to weave new, brilliant cloth fro its ancient threads, the sociologic reality of the present-day America Jewish community would seem t represent an almost insurmoun able obstacle" ["American Jewis Writing," Act II, June].

Just this—"the sociological rea ity"—is what the imaginative writ is least interested in, and sets ou in fact, to bypass.

The difference between fictio and "sociological reality" is precis ly that fiction is *not* sociology, b *something else*—sprung and nou ished from different sources, hea ing for a different destination. Wh pervades Mrs. Wisse's article is a essential disbelief in fiction fiction. Otherwise she would n fall into the fundamental (and, f a good reader, unforgivable) crit cal error of taking the narrato "I" as "identifiable with the auth herself."

Writing is a double emanatio of the imagination: inventive an speculative. When the imaginatic is more inventive, it inhabits ficti forms; when it is more speculativ it takes the form of the essay. I neither case can the imagination b reduced to a gloss on "sociologic reality." To reduce it to this is n to take literature seriously. And r one who *does* take literature se ously—or even that lesser enterpris "writing"—would wish to attach term like "fortification of art by a vertising" to that part of the wri ing impulse which is lured by ima ination's other nature, the spec lative essay.

Fiction and speculative essa dare equally, try things out equall are reckless equally, hypothesi equally; they make up a kind poetry. Story-stuff and the stuff the speculative imagination are cor posed of flux, based on notions th are always in a state of becomin always repudiating their old forn and expressions, always correctir themselves, enlarging, regeneratin developing or regressing, discove ing. In 1970, for instance, I "inven ed" New Yiddish, which imagine a "liturgical" Jewish literature, i novative *piyyutim* in the form stories, essays, and poems written i

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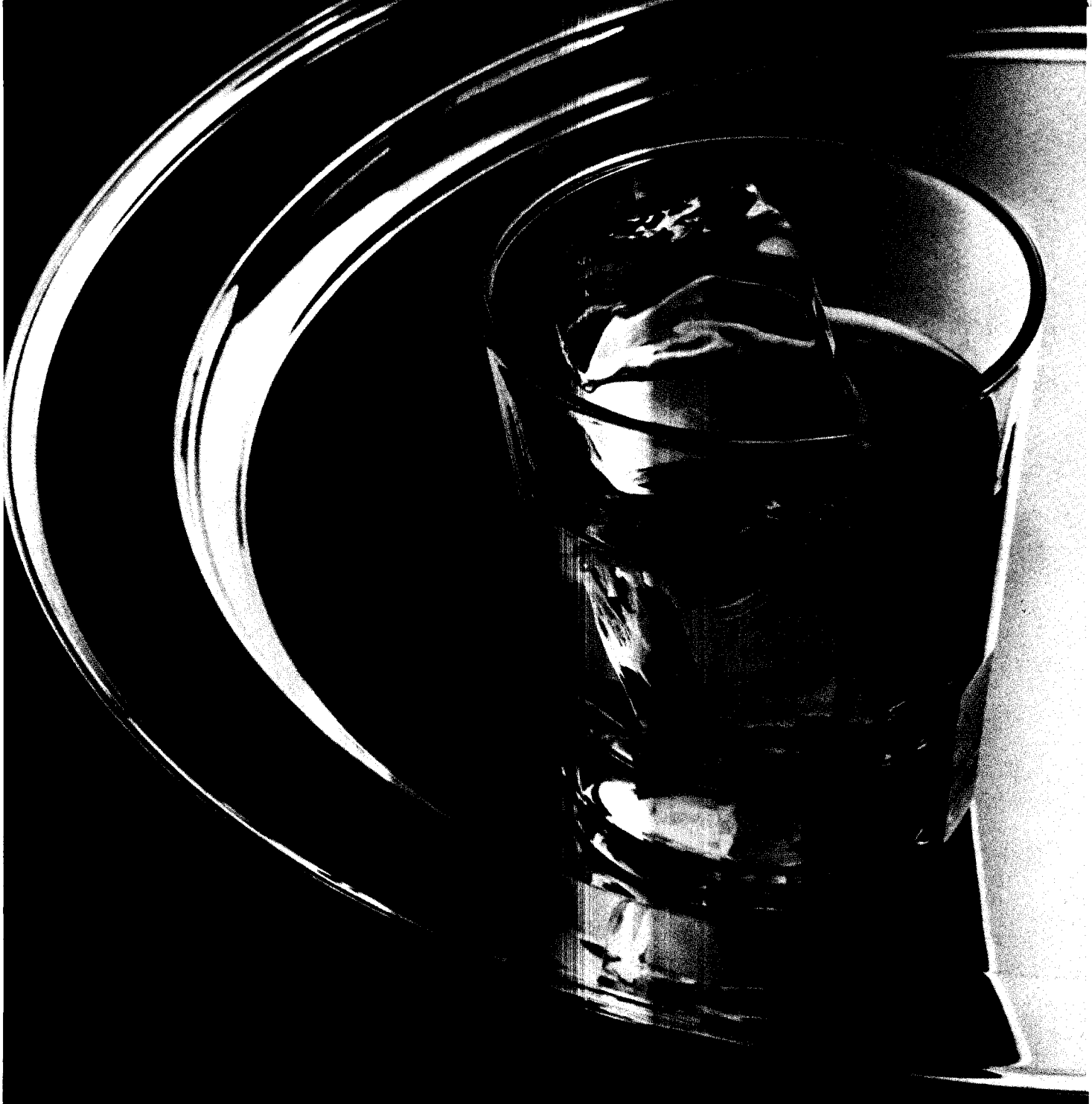

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English. Half a decade later, worrying an ancient Jewish question—art *vs.* deed—I began to wonder whether writing fiction itself (i.e., playing at make-believe) was really a Jewish calling. This musing took two forms, both equally "invented"—a tale, and an essay "explicating" the tale, the latter a preface to a book of tales. Which one counts more than the other? Which, in fact, is the *real* tale, which should be trusted to tell the writer's heart? It hardly matters. Each is a fiction, each is a speculation; both are made up, invented; both are, in the most serious sense, dreams. Are these newer dreams an "advance" on the dream of 1970? A regression? A foolish contradiction? A self-repudiation? A fresh development? A malicious false messianism? A sign of personal, intellectual, and artistic insecurity?

A person sits alone at a desk and dreams. And then, astoundingly, bewilderingly, the cultural critic comes along and explains that the dreamer is really a "self-styled spokesman," a "cultural impresario" who "has launched a veritable campaign to promote the idea of a Jewish literary community." And worst of all, that imagination's alternate mind, essay writing, is the "fortification of art by advertising."

Now the reason this is more dangerous than comical (though it is comical too—such public power attributed to such minuscule sales!) is that by not taking literature seriously enough for what it is—play and try-out and hypothesis and dream—the cultural critic tends to take individual writers *too* seriously: as if a storywriter were a thinker to be reckoned with, or a philosopher of civilization building cohesive thought systems. After all, artists and dreamers shouldn't be taken seriously, and not only because they are not philosophers; we know what happens when societies are run by visionaries for the sake of an aesthetic ideal—weren't the Jews and Gypsies a smudge on Nordic loveliness? The poetry of fiction may take up ideas, may resemble ideas—but not "real" ideas, i.e., ideas about reality; like, say, an idea about a political conflict, or a pattern of immigration, or the exact geographical location of a "traditional Jewish environment." Plato had a point when he threw the poets out—even, it seems to me, a "Jewish" point—what have they to do with reality? All writing is fabrication, including criticism.

If "observation and experience" were the only sources of fiction-making, and the "sociological reality" the only standard, then imaginative writers, because for the most part they fail to transcribe or come to terms with "insurmountable" sociological facts, would be misleaders of society at worst, cultural advertisers at best, and liars and plagiarists somewhere in between.

But Mrs. Wisse's finicalness lies not, I think, in her trusting what she sees is really there (as who should not?). It lies in her trusting imaginative writing only enough to let it tell her what she sees, rather than what she might see. It lies in her not distrusting writers enough. It lies in her holding up stasis as the mode of art (to be fair again, she might call it steadiness), instead of flux, movement, freedom, invention, risk. Cultural critics want consistency and steadiness; of course they do. Like nervous photographers, they want the subject to hold still.

Imagination won't hold still. It goes after night moths and lightning. Worse yet, it is the principle of imagination's regular diet to have its cake and eat it too—so that the most ordinary stories can encompass both what is seen and what might be seen, admittedly a risky pairing. "I too dislike it," Marianne Moore once told us, speaking of the imagination of poetry. For what I think are Jewish reasons, I dislike it even more, but unlike Mrs. Wisse will not deny its powers only because they are inconvenient, and fail to serve a literary hypothesis called "sociological reality."

A letter to the editor, Mrs. Wisse says, is one sign of a cultural impresario or advertiser. Is this letter to the editor the work of a cultural advertiser, or of a private struggler amazed, and alarmed, at being taken so seriously? The whole condition of reading and especially of writing is most appropriately understood when it is rendered as Lewis Carroll did: "reeling and writhing." In any case, someone here is being, if not high-flown, then a bit too high-minded. Is it the storywriter or the critic?

CYNTHIA OZICK
New Rochelle, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ruth R. Wisse's discussion of *My Own Ground* got me to thinking critically about the book again; something I haven't done in months. To my horror, I realized that in Jacob's dream, which climaxes the novel, I wrote, "Her mouth was smeared with blood," rather than "Her lips. . . ."

A novel is composed of words. To understand one, Mrs. Wisse must get rid of her sociological preconceptions—theories of what fiction should be—and learn to read. If she wants to know what *My Own Ground* is about, she should begin by studying its "network of images," as an astute critic in the daily New York *Times* suggested.

HUGH NISSENSON
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In Ruth R. Wisse's "American Jewish Writing, Act II," there are two quotations attributed to me. No further source is given. The effect is of supportive agreement, on my part, with Mrs. Wisse's ideas. In fact, the opposite is the case, but this can only be established by referring to the antecedents of these quotations.

The quoted sentences originally appeared in my article, "The Holocaust and the American Jewish Novelist," published in the October 1974 issue of *Midstream*. In the course of that article, I ruminated about the oddness of the prevailing tone of American writers who were Jews. Despite the fact that they had been writing during the period of Holocaust knowledge, the tone (with the outstanding exceptions of Bellow and Malamud) was by and large comic and satirical. I wondered about why that should be so, and about Jews and writing in America, and about whether the literary tone they had developed could serve to treat ideas that were central to Jewish experience. I wondered also about the Jewishness of writers who wrote "with the eyes alone" and ended with a hope—or a plea or whatever it was—that Jewish writers who wrote about Jews as the material nearest at hand would educate themselves in Jewish ideas. What about the lost (if lost) aspiration of Jews? What about the memory, however debased, of the injunction to be a kingdom of priests? Jewish writers, I said, must educate themselves so that they would never again see merely what they saw around them, but also the penumbra of what might be.

This lengthy piece, all of whose connecting links I have had to omit

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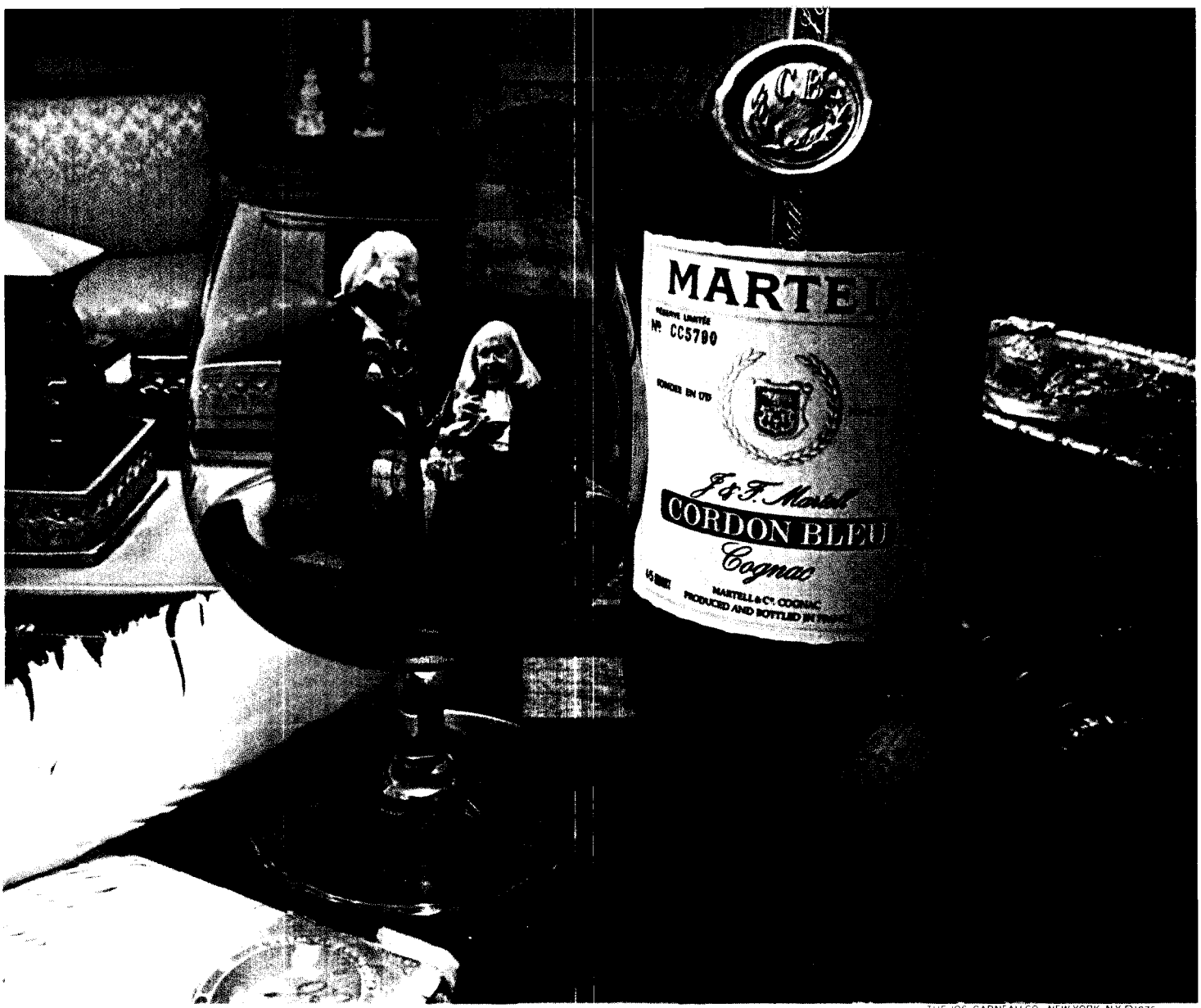

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in this crude summary, was quoted from at length in a paper Mrs. Wisse read at the 1975 Northeast Modern Language Association meeting in Montreal. Her paper was called "New Directions in Jewish American Literature." . . . [In it] Mrs. Wisse set up . . . a hypothesis of new directions in Jewish writing, and quoted at considerably more length than in her review from my article in *Midstream*, to sketch in for her paper a background of dissatisfaction among writers with books written about Jewish life based on observation alone. This she apparently saw as the beginning of a trend, and she then cited work by me, by Hugh Nissenson, Cynthia Ozick, and Arthur A. Cohen.

Mrs. Wisse concluded, however, that we four "skirted the actuality of . . . readership. The real Jewish American remains the province of the uncommitted American Jewish writer who can afford, because he waves no national banner, to show him as he is."

I have no rejoinder to make to such a conclusion except perhaps a shrug, or "How do you know?" or "Why not wait and see?"

However, I wondered then, and I still do, why Mrs. Wisse bothered to set up a hypothesis in which four writers were first discovered to be a group and then, in the next moment, dismissed as a group that would not work out. Apart from the futility (it seems to me) of grouping together dissimilar writers on the strength (or weakness) of a single hypothesis, there is the further arbitrariness of then dismissing these writers as being insufficiently supportive of said hypothesis.

The impression one gets from all this is that for the critic of Jewish writing, the material is running terribly thin. There is no time (for the critic) to wait for flowering, for the individual writers to make their individual growths and turnings. They must be, on the instant, pinned and dissected. . . .

Ideas, of course, are like water or, alas, gas. Meant to pass freely. But I do not want to be understood as being, by implication, in agreement with Mrs. Wisse's conclusions about trends in Jewish writing, or acts of any number in their progress, or with her comments on the writers whom she reviewed. I think she would better have served the cause of writing, Jewish and otherwise, by responding to the uniqueness of these works by Nissenson and Ozick, instead of bundling them into trends, dividing them into acts, and in general distracting herself and us with so much curtain-raising and -lowering.

I do not agree with Mrs. Wisse that sociology yields the best fiction. The writers who interest me most write out of the inside of head and heart. The created self perceives the world. It must be so. How else account for a Bellow and a Pynchon existing in the same time/space frame? Or to narrow the frame, how else account for a Sammler and a Henderson and a Citrine from the same hand? Surely there is a will-to-satire—which willfully ignores much!

It is untrue, therefore, that Jewish novelists (or any novelists) must write satire because the sociological reality yields only that. Moreover, there is satire and satire. One annihilates, the other points to inner possibilities in the very subject

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of satire. Much is conditioned by what's inside the head and heart of the novelist. The act of seeing what is not yet there—what sociology cannot yield—is creation.

NORMA ROSEN
New York City

RUTH R. WISSE writes:

Jewish writers seem to have inherited from Jewish mothers the problems of letting go. . . .

As if to confirm their shared attitudes and outlook, the three writers, transfixed by the word "sociological" as it appears in the final paragraph of my article, have distorted its meaning in a surprisingly similar way, and stood the whole argument on its head. When I wrote, "for those who take Judaism seriously as a cultural alternative . . . the sociological reality of the present-day American Jewish community would seem to present an almost insurmountable obstacle," I was hardly saying that writers *must* address themselves to the ways in which most people in their immediate society live (although why Cynthia Ozick should consider this outside the imaginative writer's range, I fail to understand; *Emma* and *Dubliners* seem to me pretty fair books). I was saying that writers who wish to give positive representation to Judaism or "Jewishness" in any fictional form would have a hard time finding a convincing and congenial fictional atmosphere within the Jewish mainstream—the "sociological reality." This seems to me to be a fairly obvious and elementary point, and it takes a bad case of "broken telephone" to get from there to an alleged argument for sociology in fiction.

If Hugh Nissenson's model of astute criticism is Christopher Lehmann-Haupt's graceless review in the New York *Times*, his dissatisfaction with mine can only be flattering. Since he directs me to his network of images, I shall confess that I find the increasing self-consciousness of his imagery to be squeezing precious life-blood from his fiction. Nor, incidentally, do I fail to notice the repressed aggression in the imagery of his letter.

It is difficult to determine from Norma Rosen's letter if she is peeved because I quote her too much or because I quote her too little. But in any case she misunderstands the critical process: quotation does not imply agreement, any more than the analysis of literary trends negates the "uniqueness" of individual writers or that the finding of imperfection amounts to "dismissal." If Mrs. Rosen will read Miss Ozick's letter, she will learn that I take these writers too seriously. The evolution of a Jewish culture in the English language of which literature might form a part, is of intense concern to all those who live as Jews in English. If I am not quite as sanguine about the outcome as are some of its heralds—and my article suggested why I am not—at least I will not have to retract my views "half a decade later."

As for Miss Ozick, far be it from me to inhibit her imagination—especially since I have so often enjoyed the fruits of it—but neither can I accept her comfortable self-image as the guileless purist, a kind of Jewish Peter Pan. The artist, she would have us know, is a different kind of human being, creature of pure play. While we critics, poor dogpatchers of the imagination, may be held accountable for what we write, artists demand a permanent distinction between themselves and *all* they produce. This distinction extends not only to literature—where Miss Ozick pushes fiction over the brink of the real, and then accuses finicky reviewers of ignoring the boundaries—but to speeches and essays, which, she says, are all fictions in speculative form. Since Miss Ozick's own playful non-fiction musings have run to visions of extreme Jewish alarm, couched in political terms, as well as to visions of a reconstituted Jewish culture, one might have expected her to hold a more sober sense of authorial responsibility. Her non-fiction, like her fiction, may be fabrication, created by a person sitting alone at a desk and dreaming, but when it assumes the form of real ideas, in public—whether in book reviews, prefaces, or political and cultural analyses—it declares itself steady and responsible, and is so to be judged.

NYC: Who's to Blame?

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

After reading James Ring Adams's article, "Why New York Went Broke" [May], the members of the COMMENTARY study group to which I belong find that several comments are necessary. . . .

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By selectively choosing examples, such as generous pensions and tuition-free higher education, Mr. Adams chooses to emphasize middle-class gains as a major cause of New York City's financial woes. While these programs undeniably cost money, we do not feel that the middle class has been unduly benefited by city spending. One could just as easily point at programs which have benefited other social groups within the city—for example, the expensive leases the city has signed for day-care centers. While we are in favor of providing such facilities, one could ask whose interests have been served by the long and expensive leases which have been signed. We maintain that it is not families with small children who have benefited but wealthy property owners. This is but one example of how mismanagement has distorted the liberal values of the city's voters for the profit of a small group of wealthy people.

Even the poor have benefited. Although Mr. Adams tries to play down the role of welfare in the city budget, it is an undeniable fact that welfare does cost a lot of money. While we are in favor of meeting the needs of poor people, one cannot deny that there are abuses in the welfare program. For instance, Trude Lash's recent study shows that there are approximately 100,000 children receiving welfare who are not eligible according to the census reports. Even if Dr. Lash's statistics should prove to be incorrect by a wide margin, abuses must still constitute a serious drain on the city's economy.

The fact of the matter is that any action the city takes will profit some groups at the expense of others. One could ask why Mr. Adams does not analyze city dealings such as the Bronx Market and see who gains and who loses. Perhaps he would then come to the conclusion that the middle class isn't the only one with its fingers in the pie, or, more accurately, that other groups are taking a proportionally larger share. By selectively choosing the "right" city policies one could "prove" that just about any group in the city is "responsible" for the current economic situation.

Aside from selectively choosing his issues, Mr. Adams does not seem to analyze the issues he lists from more than one point of view. For example, he says that New York City does not have a larger percentage of poor people than other cities, but he neglects the important variable of how much these other cities are spending per poor person.

Another example. Mr. Adams claims that illegal aliens do not go on welfare and therefore do not constitute an economic burden. However, illegal aliens are still a burden because they probably are not paying taxes and are therefore not contributing to revenues.

A final criticism of Mr. Adams is that he writes from altogether too narrow a perspective. He chooses to analyze the city in isolation without taking into account the state and the entire country. It is probably true, as he writes, that the city spends 60 per cent of its revenue on personnel, but instead of chiding the city for this he should ask why it is necessary for the city to do so. In whose interest is it that the city bears the burden of expenses which in other states are paid for by the state, and in other countries by the national government? Instead of chiding the city for spending money in an attempt to give its population a minimum living standard and a chance for education, perhaps he should look to a higher level of government and ask why such a large percentage of the burden should fall upon the city.

ESTHER GOLDBERG
New York City

JAMES RING ADAMS writes:

When one looks at New York City's budget and its social statistics and starts to do the necessary multiplying, adding, subtracting, and dividing, one learns that the city's official explanation for its fiscal embarrassment is not only misleading, it is almost the exact opposite of the truth. The most important source of this problem, I maintain, is *not* the city's generosity to the poor and downtrodden, but its attempt to subsidize large portions of the middle class, including its own employees. Just analyze the budget.

The city's own tax revenues provide approximately $8 billion of its $13 billion budget. As Esther Goldberg agrees, the bulk of this $8 billion goes for personnel costs, including pensions and fringe benefits which are substantially more generous than those reported for other cities. More than 20 per cent is eaten up by debt service, the penalty for a generation of borrowing. About 13 per cent, or $1 billion of this $8 billion, is the city taxpayers' share of welfare *an* Medicaid. Certainly welfare is serious drain on the city, especiall since New York's payments run a much as 50 per cent above the na tional level (even though the cos of-living difference from the natior al urban lower-income budget only 7 per cent). But the propo tions tell the story. The bulk of th city's tax revenues do not go to th poor; they more or less directl benefit the middle class.

Take the day-care scandal, abou which only the half has been tolc The long leases apparently wer conditions which the banks set be fore they would provide mortgag money for these centers. The cit agreed because it felt the need fo great haste in setting up these prc grams, and one reason for the hast was the fact that the city could ob tain reimbursement of seven-eighth of its expenditures, without limi As I mentioned in the article, Joh Lindsay's policy was to maximiz the federal contribution to the cit budget wherever he could. Well Washington caught on, and put limit to the expenditures it woul reimburse. The city had to pay 10 per cent of the rest, from $20 to $3 million. This perspective has no been provided by the press or cit politicians, but it is necessary t understand why the Human Re sources Administration has sudden ly decided to close 49 day-care cen ters. It was the cost of these center which exceeded the federal fundin limit and fell entirely on the cit taxpayer.

Furthermore, even though th cost of day care is included in tha $1 billion of welfare-Medicaid ex penses I mentioned earlier, thes programs have been serving a larg number of middle-class children According to a mayoral task-forc report, more than a third of th children in the program were in eligible. The state responded b raising eligibility standards. For ex ample, for families of two, the up per limit is 115 per cent of the median gross income, and that b definition includes the middle middle class.

But obviously not every middle-class child is in a day-care center nor does every middle-class family live in a rent-controlled apartment or own a Mitchell-Lama coop. The worst aspect of the city's middle-class subsidies is their arbitrary nature. Welfare, at least, has been extended fairly uniformly to those poor who want it, but the middle-class fam-

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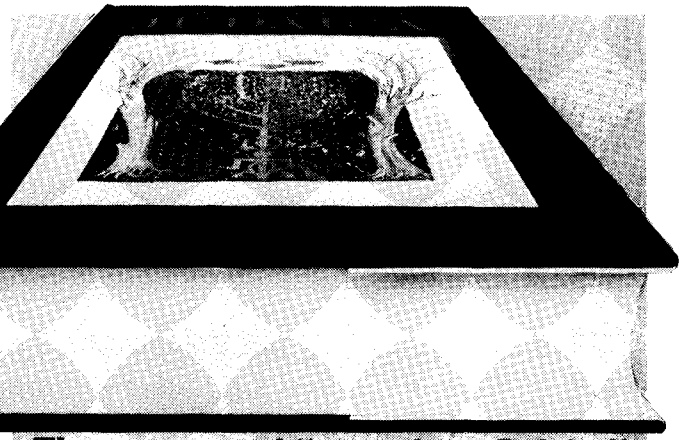

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ilies who benefit are those who know how to pull strings, who have good political connections or a fairly broad network of family ties in the local area. In short, the city's system works for the people with roots and discriminates against new arrivals. What do you think are the chances of a Midwestern newcomer finding a rent-controlled apartment?

Mrs. Goldberg raises a question about aliens on which I can provide information I did not have available when I wrote the article. In a series of interviews conducted for the U.S. Labor Department, researchers found to their surprise that illegal aliens do indeed pay taxes. More than 77 per cent of the aliens interviewed reported that social security was withheld from their paychecks, and 73 per cent said that federal taxes were also deducted. Since New York City taxes are also deducted from paychecks, it follows that a large proportion of the aliens here do indeed contribute to city revenues.

As a final note, Mrs. Goldberg and I disagree on the extent to which wealthy property owners can be blamed for the city's trouble. But I share her indignation at the city's dealings in such cases as the day-care centers and the Bronx Market. These are symptoms of a pervasive corruption which grows up almost inevitably when government tries to take on functions better left to the private sector. The best solution would be drastically to limit the reach of the city-hall bureaucracy.

The Soviet-Egyptian "Rift"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Despite its relative brevity, Uri Ra'anan's article, "The Soviet-Egyptian 'Rift'" [June], is an excellent exposé of the fraudulent nature of the falling out between Egypt and the Soviet Union. . . . Particularly important, in my opinion, is the author's demonstration that Sadat's decision to woo the United States was not completely his own but was encouraged, if not inspired, by the Soviet Communist leaders. As Mr. Ra'anan notes: "The whole process costs the Soviet Union nothing, while the United States is in a position of having to pressure a friend and ally [Israel] to take measures which the latter perceives as inimical to its vital national interests."

What, then, might have been added to this fine piece of work?

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Although Mr. Ra'anan does indicate that "The essence of Kissinger's approach has been to woo the clients of the Soviet Union by offering them what they were unable to obtain by war . . . ," I believe that the full extent of Kissinger's responsibility for the naive acceptance by President Ford and most other decision-makers . . . of the idea that "dissension" has developed between the Russians and Egyptians should be clearly and fully exposed. Considering the power and prestige still possessed by this country's Secretary of State and the incalculable harm I believe he has done to Israel and to the interests of the Western democracies, his role in the Soviet-Egyptian conspiracy to delude . . . the free world must be disclosed.

Several times in his article Mr. Ra'anan refers to the incredible manner in which the West and its opinion-makers, apparently including the press, have swallowed the hoax of a "breach" in Soviet-Egyptian relations. . . . But shouldn't he have presented an opinion concerning the reasons for this dangerous situation? Why is it that the media have adopted a policy that has contributed so greatly to the ignorance and confusion of people in the Western democracies? Have decisive segments of the media surrendered to the New Left thesis that American power is an unmitigated evil and that any stratagem designed to undermine or destroy that power is by definition good? Have substantial numbers of Western purveyors of "information" sold out to the Left totalitarians of the 70's as the French news media sold out to the Nazi totalitarians during the 30's?

Lastly, it appears to me that the author might have cited one additional proof of the fraudulent nature of the "rupture" in Soviet-Egyptian relations—the continued cooperation of the two nations within the UN. In no way can an Egyptian movement away from the Russians and toward the Americans be demonstrated within the various bodies of the world organization. In debate, in political maneuvering, and, most importantly, in the numerous votes that have been held, Egypt and the Soviet Union, together with the remainder of the Arab-Communist bloc, remain solidly aligned against Israel, the United States, and the Western democracies as a whole. . . .

SOL MODELL
Los Angeles Valley College
Van Nuys, California

URI RA'ANAN writes:

Sol Modell's comments on "The Soviet-Egyptian 'Rift'" are generous. My article, however, was meant not so much to present *my* thesis as to acquaint readers with the revelations made, primarily to Arab audiences, by President Sadat and his confidants (as opposed to the versions Egyptian leaders have presented to the less informed or critical Western public). Insofar as these revelations seem to be supported by "hard" data, by information found in Soviet and other sources, and by the dictates of common sense, I agree that it is difficult to comprehend why they have been ignored with such steadfast persistence in the United States and elsewhere.

In addition to my article, I presented a more detailed documentation and analysis of this topic to Senator Humphrey's Subcommit-

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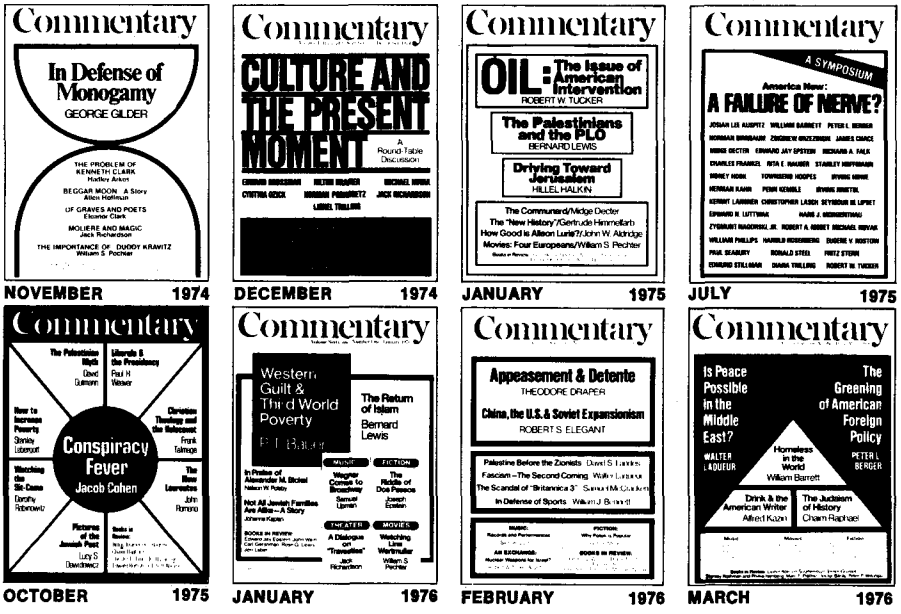

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tee on Foreign Assistance (of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee). In those hearings, I did address myself, of course, to implications for U.S. policy-makers. In the COMMENTARY essay, I refrained from attempting to analyze the motivations of those commentators, reporters, and decision-makers who have continued to avert their eyes from unpleasant realities. I suppose I am loath to enter a field more properly left to professionally qualified medical practitioners. After all, even they have problems elucidating the drives of patients right next to them on the couch—instant psychohistory at a distance, therefore, would not be a rewarding enterprise, at least not for me. Having said this, however, I do not mean to imply, necessarily, that Mr. Modell's analysis is mistaken.

"Seven Beauties"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read William S. Pechter's review of *Seven Beauties* ["Obsessions," Movies, May] and it's hard to believe we saw the same film. His so-called critique seems more like a neurotic diatribe against the creator than a discussion of the creation. . . .

How might one judge a film? Visually? The film is photographed stunningly, with great care taken in selection of settings, camera angles, lighting, and framing. . . . Script? Totally original and as compelling as *The Pawnbroker* but with a somewhat different point of view. Acting? Absolutely convincing portrayals by Giannini and others of Miss Wertmuller's "stock company." . . .

What else did Mr. Pechter ignore or miss? Mainly, he missed the point. The movie didn't "somehow all work out"; it very carefully developed in the perceptive viewer a sense of recognition, repugnant to many, that unless you are literally "under the gun," you cannot accurately predict how you will behave. Will you choose to "die on your feet" or "live on your knees"? Our "hero" consistently chose the latter, as Mimi in *Mimi* chose to be "seduced," and the "heroine" in *Swept Away* opted for subjugation. Mr. Pechter, in his own passion for "profundity," misinterprets everything important in the film. Fat is *not* beautiful. Survival is *not* deplored. Suicide is *not* advocated. Female flesh is *not* repugnant *per se*. And what Miss Wertmuller does for personal fun and games is a critical non sequitur.

Mr. Pechter covers his tracks by claiming that it really doesn't make any difference to his judgment of the film's value what its position is (just in case his misinterpretation is exposed) because the film is "coarsely unfeeling" and lacks "passionate caring." Well, for my money, it's Mr. Pechter who has that problem, not the film.

Yes, the film *is* hard to take on several levels. It deals with a moral decision that perhaps most of us would prefer not to have brought to our consciousness. Certainly this is ample justification for shocking us into attention. This attention is rewarded for, at the very least, it answered a question which has long perplexed me: Why, during the Holocaust, did so many go to their deaths passively? I now know that I could not accurately predict my own behavior in the given circumstances unless and until my very survival was actually at stake. What's more, I'm convinced that no one else could honestly know how he would behave, no matter how moral and principled he imagines himself to be. . . .

SANFORD SUSSMAN
Syosset, New York

WILLIAM S. PECHTER writes:

Enjoyable as it might be to turn Sanford Sussman's methods back on him (by charging that his failure to be convinced by what I wrote testifies only to his own neurotic blindness, and the like), the fact is I never expected my brief remarks on *Seven Beauties* to convince anyone of anything: rather, I regarded them as merely a disgusted postscript to my previous piece on Lina Wertmuller's earlier films ["Watching Lina Wertmuller," Movies, January]. *That* piece, in which I feel I bent over backward to be fair to Miss Wertmuller, might, I hope, be found convincing by at least those readers still open-minded on the subject of Miss Wertmuller's work, if not by others as rabidly committed to the notion of her artistic greatness as is Mr. Sussman. In any case, I'm not prepared to restate the arguments of that earlier piece here and only want to note that the *obiter dicta* (on fatness, survival, suicide, etc.) I attributed to Miss Wertmuller were quoted in a feature article on her (written by an admirer) which appeared in *New Times* magazine around the time of *Seven Beauties'* New York release. If Mr. Sussman (or any other reader) wishes to read a more thorough discussion of *Seven Beauties* than mine, I strongly recommend the splendid review of the film by Pauline Kael (who hadn't written about Miss Wertmuller before) in the *New Yorker* of February 16, 1976. And if Mr. Sussman then wants to write a letter to Miss Kael telling her about her blindness and his insight, let's see if he can get as undeservedly restrained a reply from her as this one.

U.S.-Soviet Exchanges—Contd.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I admired Theodore Draper's treatment of the larger issues of détente in his article, "Appeasement and Détente" [February], and found it quite perceptive on some critical questions facing the United States in its relations with the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, I felt compelled to enter some serious caveats in your June issue [Letters from Readers] regarding Mr. Draper's presentation of the state of academic relations between the two countries. My letter was intended as a footnote and minor corrective to his larger thesis, and I regret the hostile tone of his response in that issue.

Mr. Draper's recourse to "authority" in his rebuttal by citing certain statements of Zbigniew Brzezinski, Robert F. Byrnes, and Richard Pipes hardly closes the case. Each of the gentlemen concerned holds more complex views on the matter than he suggests in his excerpts. Professor Byrnes is more than familiar with both the achievements and persistent problems of these programs through his extraordinary services as chairman of the Inter-University committee on Travel Grants during the 1960's, and he would hardly have devoted almost eight years of his life to them unless he thought that they were, on balance, worth it. The challenges, minor victories, and constant frustrations which these programs entail have changed little since the days when Byrnes was at the helm, and lend themselves poorly to simplistic summations.

The Brzezinski comment which Mr. Draper quotes (with which I am inclined, on the whole, to be sympathetic) is addressed to a broader range of Soviet-American re-

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lations, contains only one sentence on scholarly exchanges, and can hardly be considered as exhaustive of Professor Brzezinski's views on the issue. It should be pointed out, however, that harassment of American scholars has all but ended in the last five years, a development at least partly due to the International Research and Exchanges Board's frank discussions of consequences with Soviet authorities. Moreover, every Soviet exclusion of an American scholar is immediately matched by IREX's rejection of a Soviet nominee so that the "score" is absolutely even in this regard. It is leverage that we are more than happy to use in the interests of reciprocity. The image of an absolutely open door to the United States for Soviet scholars is simply false: not only do we reject their nominations when they reject ours, but only a minority of long-term Soviet visitors are even placed at the primary universities and other research centers which they request. Because of rejection by the American university departments requested and a variety of other considerations, more than 70 per cent of incoming Soviet scholars are thus "misplaced" in an average year. Furthermore, a survey of American hosts of Soviet visitors in the last two years shows that approximately 45 per cent of the latter have had to change their original research focus at the insistence of their American hosts or under the research conditions existing at the host university. This is a far cry from the image presented in Mr. Draper's comments that the Soviets step all over us and that we receive nothing in return.

The letter which Mr. Draper solicited from Professor Pipes is for the most part a reasonable discussion of the issues and describes one scholar's fate on the exchanges: his experience "in sum was a mixed one." He was glad he went because he gained access to some essential materials but he "failed to see a great deal more." Such an evaluation is not uncommon among the reports from returning alumni. Yet, with all due respect to Pipes and his position in the field, I must point out that his experience was but one of many and that I have read at least as many contrary reports from alumni stating that they had received more data and access than they had expected and that their visits were a great success.

Furthermore, Pipes's very acceptance and placement by the Soviets was a cause of some small satisfaction to the IREX staff. The Soviets had for years rejected the nominations of scholars whom they had branded as anti-Soviet, and Pipes himself was the object of numerous vicious attacks. We argued strongly with our Soviet counterparts that their sensitivities to criticism in this regard were exaggerated, and that, were we to apply similar criteria of "anti-Americanism" to the published work of Soviet scholars, we would hardly be able to accept a single one of their nominees. The situation was impossible and, if carried to its absurd conclusion, would have led to a cancellation of the exchanges. In effect we argued that the Soviet Union was a "big country now" and would surely not come crashing to its knees because of the real or perceived criticism of a handful of American scholars. As a result of these discussions, Pipes was accepted. It was nothing dramatic, and surely neither deserving of Pipes's gratitude nor a guarantee of flawless hospitality to him while actually participating on the exchanges. But it was a small note of progress and a precedent from which to build a more satisfactory experience for similar cases in the future.

We are prepared to cancel the programs if necessary. In the summer of 1975 when the Soviet Academy of Sciences arbitrarily rejected two of our senior scholar nominees, we suspended all activities on that program, informed the Soviets of the moratorium, and made clear our intent to annul the agreement if the scholars in question were not received. One month later the Soviet Academy accepted them for the program and the exchange was resumed.

Mr. Draper creates another seriously misleading issue through his reliance on Pipes's final comments to the effect that little work is being done by young American scholars on such topics as the Cheka, forced-labor camps, food requisitions, etc. He implies that the topics actually being done by Americans on the exchanges are worthless. This is nonsense. Pipes was on the exchange and did not work on the Cheka or similar topics. Yet I am sure he considered his actual theme of serious scholarly substance and worthy of inclusion in the exchanges. Byrnes has been nominated for the exchanges to the Academy of Sci-

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ences for next year and plans to work on the great 19th-century Russian historian Kliuchevskii. The topic has nothing to do with labor camps. Does that mean it is worthless in terms of "reciprocity"?

Furthermore, such a judgment would be based on a false premise: that Soviet scholars are actually working on topics of comparable "sensitivity" in the United States. They have not, are not, and most probably will not. In his June rebuttal, Mr. Draper persists in twisting the description of research themes done by Soviets here. The actual and more neutral titles which I provided, he writes, "could easily cover the subjects mentioned by Professor Byrnes and me." They could and probably do, but the point is that Mr. Draper (*qua* Byrnes) lists not the titles themselves, but only the most negative and hostile possible description and interpretation of those themes. I provided a counterpart list of American research topics done in the USSR this year: "General Supervisory Functions of the Soviet Procuracy," "Planning the Time-Rate Use of Resources under Socialism," "Systematic Social Engineering in Soviet Central Asia: The Revolutionary Experience of Moslem Women, 1930-1970," etc. These titles are similarly susceptible of negative interpretation and criticism by narrow Soviet bureaucrats who might (and surely do) read them as hostile and subversive of Soviet society.

Mr. Draper writes of "disingenuous double-talk" in my discussion of reciprocity. Neither of us used the term very carefully in our June discussion, and it is crucial to be more accurate. There is a confusion over three different criteria for reciprocity employed in our discussion, and Mr. Draper is wrong on all three. The first criterion simply states that a given number of American scholars spend a given period of time engaged in research in the Soviet Union on topics of legitimate academic and scholarly concern in return for identical units spent by Soviets here. This condition is being fulfilled; the topics done by American scholars are not fraudulent and worthless; they are substantial pieces of research, and the failure rate in performance does not exceed the failure rate of Soviet scholars here. Reciprocity in this most basic sense definitely exists.

The second level of reciprocity would insist that "negative topics" such as those listed by Mr. Draper and Byrnes be included and done in equal numbers by both sides. I had this category in mind when I used the term "growing reciprocity" to indicate the inclusion of an increasing number of topics previously considered sensitive or taboo. In fact the number of Americans pursuing such "negative" topics easily outnumbers the Soviets similarly placed. It would seem, from such simple enumerations, that it is the Soviets who are increasingly suffering from a lack of reciprocity. This, of course, is not true either, since considerations of quality of access and ease of arrangements substantially modify and balance such a picture. In any case, there is reciprocity in this growing category of interchange as well.

The third category of reciprocity (and the one which is the major object of Mr. Draper's concern) is the area of the "super-topic": the Cheka, the labor camps, the food requisitions. A discussion of this category is simple because it does not exist. It is a non-issue. Such topics simply are not done by either side, and the question of reciprocity here does not arise at all. Comparable topics from a Soviet perspective might be (and I do not insist on their "moral" identity, only on their "comparability from a Soviet perspective"): "CIA Assassination Plots in the Third World," "The Internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II," "Pentagon Bombing Strategies in Vietnam," etc. These or similar topics are not being done by Soviets here, nor should it be much of a mystery why similar topics are not done by Americans in the USSR. If Pipes writes that there are "understandable reasons [why such topics as the Cheka and the labor camps] are not treated by Soviet scholars," does it strain the imagination to understand why foreigners wishing to do such research in the USSR are not greeted with open arms by Soviet authorities? These are, after all, simply academic-exchange programs which function within a very specific and limited range; is it reasonable to expect that one of their functions should be to effect the instant reformation of Soviet society? Every effort should be made to "normalize" these relationships and to make room for even the "super-topic," but it will not happen tomorrow. In the meantime, I do not find it particularly accurate or useful to blame the exchange mechanism for their relative scarcity. One might become more exercised over the matter if the Soviets were actually doing the "super-topic" here. They are not.

I am afraid I do not see why it is impossible to speak of the simultaneous existence of essential reciprocity, the slow development of increasingly frank scholarly interchanges, and the persistence of serious problems and deficiencies. These problems have both strengths and weaknesses, and I am not comfortable with the all-or-nothing Manichean dichotomies Mr. Draper seems to prefer.

Aside from our own annual reviews and reports, and ongoing reviews by the Department of State and the Board of Foreign Scholarships, there have been recent evaluations of these programs by the Ford Foundation, by specialists from the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University, various congressional committees, and a presidentially-appointed Advisory Commission on International Educational and Cultural Affairs. The reports of these groups are available to Mr. Draper on request and should begin to satisfy his closing call for a "thorough inquiry into this program." I trust he had nothing more sinister in mind for us.

DANIEL C. MATUSZEWSKI
International Research and
Exchanges Board
New York City

THEODORE DRAPER writes:

This lengthy, self-serving statement by Daniel C. Matuszewski is in part irrelevant and in part misleading. Some of his arguments violate the proper ethics of controversy. Before I get down to details, some things must be made clear.

In my original reference to the scholarly-exchange program in my article, I based myself wholly and solely on the political analysis given by Professor Robert F. Byrnes of Indiana University, who has watched this program at close range for many years. Professor Byrnes, according to Mr. Matuszewski, "is more than familiar with both the achievements and persistent problems of these programs. . . ." But Mr. Matuszewski wishes to quarrel with me, not with Professor Byrnes. This tactic is in itself a shifty device to avoid meeting Professor Byrnes's indictment directly.

It must also be kept in mind that I never mentioned the Internation-

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al Research and Exchanges Board or anyone connected with it. Mr. Matuszewski, a deputy director of IREX, chose to assume responsibility for the exchange with the Soviet Union and to inject himself into the problem raised by Professor Byrnes. I did not seek out this controversy with Mr. Matuszewski or with IREX.

At this point, the interested reader would have to turn back to the original quotation from Professor Byrnes and the subsequent statements by Professors Brzezinski and Pipes. The point made by Professor Byrnes was entirely *political*. It dealt wholly with the kind of historical subjects which American scholars are permitted to study in the Soviet Union and the kind of subjects open to Soviet scholars in the United States. That and nothing else is the issue, despite Mr. Matuszewski's efforts to distort it.

I am quite willing to agree that the sentence by Professor Brzezinski on the scholarly exchanges did not exhaust his views on the issue. I doubt whether a paragraph or even a page would exhaust his views on this or most subjects. But this is a cheap evasion. He was quite clear in that sentence that a double standard has been operating. He does not have to be "exhaustive" to be able to tell us that something has been wrong.

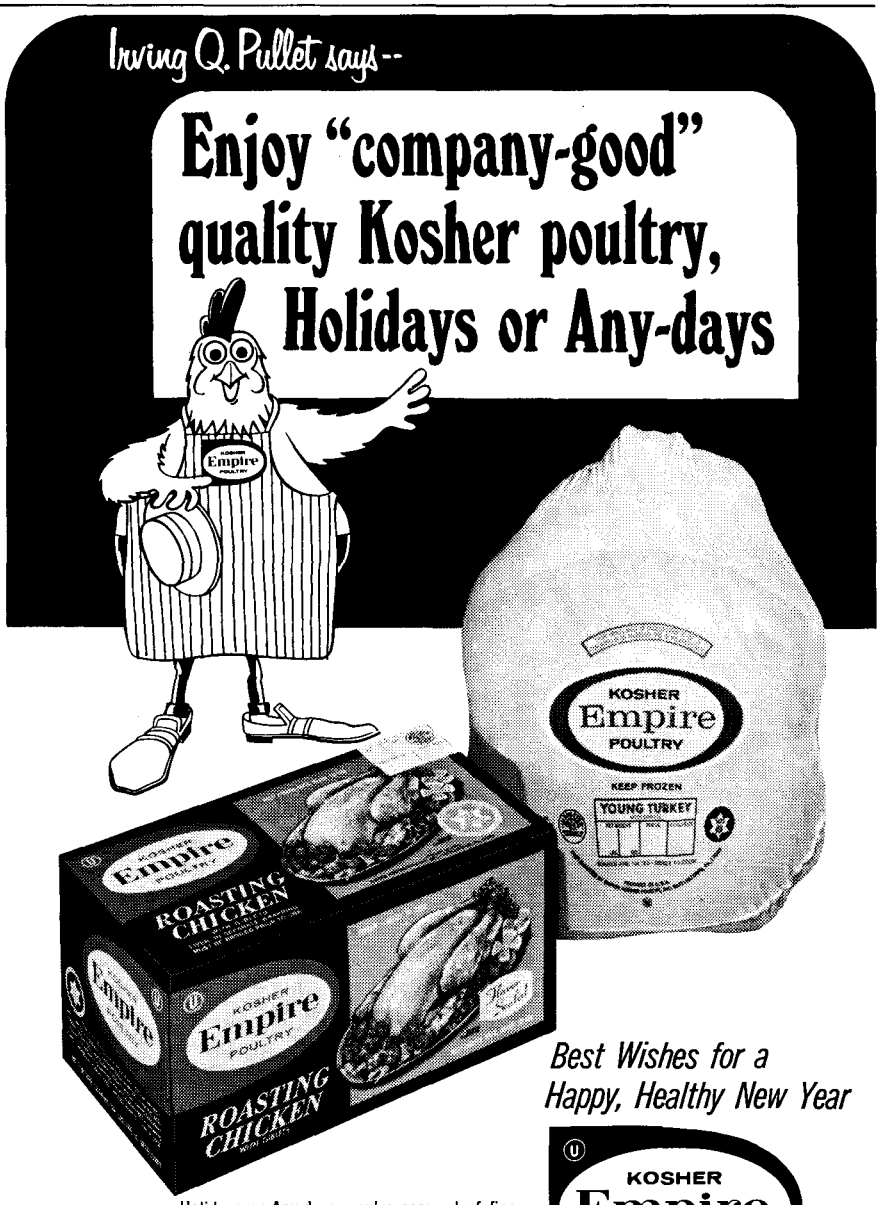
Mr. Matuszewski's comment on Professor Pipes's statement is another typical evasion. I am quite willing to believe that other alumni of this program have "received more data and access than they expected and that their visits were a great success." But were they dealing with the kind of subjects that happen to interest Professor Pipes? Or were they studying something on the order of the "Moscow Plague of 1771" or the "Formation and Function of the Russian Adverb"?

At this point Mr. Matuszewski seriously violates the ethics of controversy which should govern such a discussion. Mr. Matuszewski writes: "He [Draper] implies that the topics actually being done by Americans on the exchanges are worthless. This is nonsense." What is nonsense is that which I am supposed to have implied. Anyone who reads or rereads what I have written on this subject will find that this imputation by Mr. Matuszewski is utterly false. I have never implied any such thing. I have asserted—and not merely implied—that Americans have been restricted in their political and historical subject matter as Russians have not. That is all; the rest is malicious invention.

It is Mr. Matuszewski who nonsensically implies that I have somehow charged that American scholars were working on "fraudulent and worthless" topics. This is another one of his red herrings. I am quite ready to believe that Americans in the Soviet Union are doing "substantial pieces of research." The issue is whether they are doing the same kind of substantial research on the same kind of subjects that Soviet scholars can and do work on here. Mr. Matuszewski prefers to kick in open doors. I want to open some closed ones.

Now let us get to the main issue. I decided to take up Mr. Matuszewski's invitation to look at his reviews and reports. I have gone through several hundred pages. Here is what I found.

Two outside reviews were made available to me—by two members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of the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University, and by two consultants for the Ford Foundation. I do not know why they were recommended; they do not really address themselves to the political and historical issue in question. The closest the Columbia study comes to it is in a one-sentence observation that "the majority of fellows, especially those in the Soviet Union, had real problems in getting permission from local authorities and gaining access to archives." The other study, which I am not permitted to cite, has a brief reference to what is acceptable as "non-controversial" in the Soviet Union and East Europe; it hardly lends itself to Mr. Matuszewski's case.

Virtually all the material made available to me originated with IREX itself. The most informative were IREX annual reports from 1968 to 1975. The last three, for 1972-73, 1973-74, and 1974-75, contain lists of the actual subjects worked on by American and Soviet participants. For at least these three years, Professor Byrnes's analysis may be tested.

Of the 221 Americans, only one was able to work on a post-1945 subject—"Soviet War Fiction." Only six had worked on post-1917 subjects, none of them political in nature. The closest to it was "Soviet Economic Policies and Thought, 1917-1930."

Of the 245 Soviet participants in these three years, at least a dozen had worked on post-1945 American politics and problems, sometimes in the most sensitive areas of American life. Among their subjects were: "American Revolution and Crisis of the 60's in the U.S.," "Recent History of American-Japanese Relations," "Ideals of Young Workers and Students in the United States," "Early and Contemporary U.S.-China Relations," "Multinational Corporations, U.S. Foreign Policy, and Capital Export," "Industrial and Labor Relations in the U.S. During the 1960's and 1970's," and "World Economy and U.S. Economy."

In this period, 1972-75, the only one I could check from the material given to me, it is utterly clear that Americans—especially those in the "graduate student/young faculty" category—have found it opportune to stay away from Soviet history and politics if they wish to get into the Soviet Union. Soviet scholars have suffered from no such inhibition in comparable American history and politics.

I also understand that about half-a-dozen Soviet scholars have worked freely at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park where they can get the most intimate and voluminous documentation on the United States of the 1930's and 1940's and much else. I know of American scholars who would like to enjoy a similar privilege in the Soviet Union. Is it too much to ask that American scholars should be able to work in the Soviet Union on subjects such as "Soviet Dissidents and Crisis of the 60's in the USSR," "Recent History of Soviet-Japanese Relations," "Ideals of Young Workers and Students in the Soviet Union," "Early and Contemporary Soviet-Chinese Relations," "Industrial and Labor Relations in the Soviet Union in the 1960's and 1970's," and the like? Or should Americans be treated as if they were Russians in Soviet Russia, and Russians treated as if they were Americans in the United States?

If Mr. Matuszewski, who is in charge of the Soviet-American program, cannot recognize the existing lack of equality and reciprocity in this exchange, he is not the right person for the job. No one is asking him to be comfortable "with the all-or-nothing Manichean dichotomies Mr. Draper seems to prefer." I do not need lessons from Mr. Matuszewski on Manichean dichotomies. This kind of snide distortion is utterly uncalled for. There is no political and historical "essential reciprocity" in this program, though there has been a "*slow* development of increasingly frank scholarly interchanges, and the persistence of *serious* problems and deficiencies" (emphasis added). One of the most serious problems is Mr. Matuszewski's subterfuge of combining in one sentence a glaring untruth, immediately followed by admissions designed to soften the blow. Mr. Matuszewski's letter has convinced me more than ever that something is wrong with this program and, in his case, with those who are administering it.

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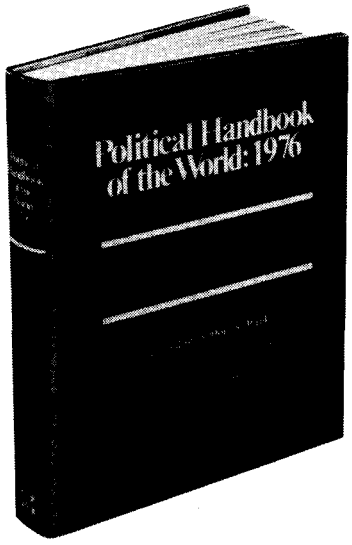

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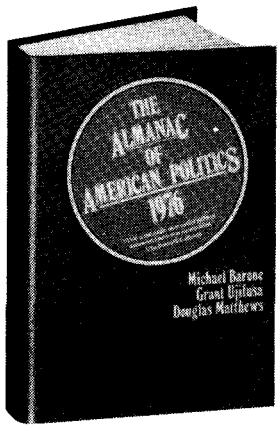

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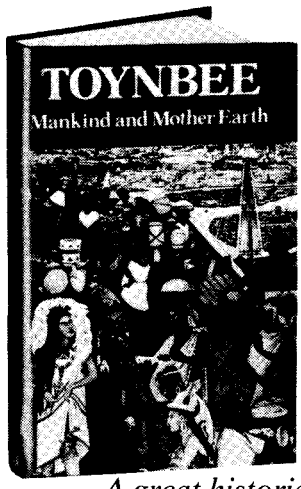

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The onshore impact of offshore oil.

Is the East Coast in for an Oil Boom?

Amoco representatives are traveling extensively to find out what the public in this area wants to know about offshore oil and natural gas exploration on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf.

We are talking to private citizens, state and local legislators, civic groups, sportsmen's and conservation groups and planning commissions. This is our first report on the important physical, ecological and economic subjects raised in these discussions.

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The fact is, even if major oil and natural gas reserves are discovered on the Outer Continental Shelf early in the exploration phase, seven to ten years would be required to bring a field into significant production. This will provide the time period necessary for the planned and gradual development of facilities and work forces in the coastal communities. There will be no sudden oil boom.

Exploratory drilling will be carried out by small, specialized crews. Later, if significant oil or gas deposits are found, the production phase should provide increased economic benefits primarily through increased income and payrolls of local suppliers to the industry. In many cases, existing terminals, storage tank farms and refineries will accommodate anticipated production.

Early exploration of the Outer Continental Shelf would establish whether there is oil and gas there. If there is, production could provide a domestic energy supply for Atlantic Coast communities and should benefit many sectors of the East Coast economy.

Watch for further reports probing the questions of onshore supply bases, pipeline landings, use of existing refineries and other issues raised by our readers.

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What Is a Liberal—Who Is a Conservative?

A Symposium

With certain issues raised by the presidential elections—but also with a broader context—in mind, COMMENTARY recently addressed the following questions to a group of American intellectuals of varying political views:

1. Are you satisfied with the way terms like liberal and conservative, or Left and Right, are used today?

2. If not, how do you think these terms should be used? If so, how do you deal with the fact that many positions which used to be called liberal are now called conservative (for example, support for economic growth or opposition to quota systems) and others which used to be called conservative are now called liberal (for example, support for decentralization or opposition to big government)?

3. Does it matter how these terms are used? Why?

The responses—sixty-four in all—appear below in alphabetical order.

Lionel Abel: According to contemporary Marxist theory, at least as sophisticated by the Frankfurt School, *Spätkapitalismus,* "late capitalism," is the right descriptive term for the mixed economies now extant in Western Europe and the United States. We are living not so much under a "state capitalist" as under a "late capitalist" regime. And thus it is we often seem to be suffering from the ills of both capitalism and socialism. On the other hand, we benefit, and this is too often forgotten, from the advantages of both systems. But in any case, if late capitalism is indeed the proper name for the system under which we live, then should not the qualification "late" also be applied to the various political options we can take under this system? Does not any liberalism, addressed to present circumstance, have to be a late liberalism? Certainly the liberalism of free-market days hardly applies in a market as circumscribed as ours. And what about conservatism? An up-to-date conservatism, actually capable of conserving anything, surely must take account of actual circumstances. It too must take a look at the historical clock; it will not be entirely determined by what was once desirable, but is now no longer possible. And leftists today know—or ought to know—that they are, and have to be, late leftists, however youthful they may have been when coming on the historical scene. Stalinists of many and sundry descriptions are nowadays in the main late Stalinists. Some of them indicate as much by denying they are Stalinists; others do so by calling themselves Maoists. So we arrive at this provisional conclusion: under late capitalism, not everybody is a capitalist or in favor of capitalism, but everybody is late, and has to be late, as a liberal, as a conservative, as a leftist, as a Stalinist.

Let us see how liberalism, conservatism, and leftism—Stalinism we need not take up here—

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differ today from what they once were; I shall compare their present with their past approaches to some problems still before us, looking at their changed focus on questions which have recently become acute: the problem of Communist participation in Western European governments allied with NATO, court-ordered busing to end *de facto* segregation, and the ever-pressing, nagging problem of wide-scale unemployment. If there are differences between liberalism late and early, conservatism late and early, leftism late and early, such differences should appear in the changing judgments made from these viewpoints with respect to the problems mentioned.

Without having examined all of the facts, one conclusion already suggests itself: late liberalism may well have much more in common with late conservatism than early liberalism could have had with early conservatism. Similarly, late liberalism may have much less in common with late leftism than early liberalism could have had with early leftism. Suppose these anticipated conclusions hold; it would mean there has been an erosion of realities and values the early positions of liberalism, conservatism, and leftism were formulated to defend. We can now understand why there was such difficulty in using the terms liberal and conservative with any real precision during the presidential primaries this year. Evidently Congressman Udall felt this to be the case, for he did not want to call himself a liberal, though he did want people who called themselves liberals, and who wanted to call him a liberal, to rally to his side. And he begged such people not to support Governor Carter, who had been called a conservative. As for Governor Carter, he succeeded in the primaries with a blatant disregard for the meanings liberal and conservative had formerly had for Democrats. In fact, the Democrats still do not know the political faith of the man who is their presidential candidate (everybody does know the religious denomination to which he belongs).

BUT let us come back to the matter of how some problems of this period are judged by the different political doctrines in their early and late expressions. I shall start with the problem of unemployment.

Early liberalism and late liberalism are alike in their objective of getting men and women who are unemployed back to work. But I believe early liberalism did not think of the private sector as having any need to be protected from government. Late liberalism does recognize such a need. It does not want the government to take workers out of the private sector, and it does not want the government to treat the private sector as anarchic, checking or inhibiting its enterprise. The problem of dealing with unemployment today is conceived very differently by the liberal from the way in which he thought about it two or three decades ago. The late liberal knows that the matter of job creation has to be thought out in every detail, with the greatest scrupulosity, including a care for each item of expense, and all this in a way that might well satisfy the staunchest conservative.

For in fact late conservatives do not now have to be against the policy of opening government jobs to people on the labor market. Arthur Burns has already conceded that the old conservative argument for continuing unemployment—that it would bring down inflation—no longer holds. But this judgment, coming from Arthur Burns, who is surely conservative, is nothing less than a condemnation of early conservatism. The concern of the late conservative has to be that jobs opened to the unemployed by the government should be jobs in fact as well as in name, and in this attitude he is unlikely to find himself opposed by late liberals.

WHAT about leftism, early and late? Early leftists never believed that the problem of mass unemployment could be solved under this system. They pointed to the unemployed with alarm, urging that the system be changed. Late leftists, however, do not take the view that the system can be changed radically, They stress their own impotence here, something early leftists never did. This feeling of powerlessness has, I think, increased the hate content of leftist utterances. Now even the rather professorial and mild-mannered Norman Birnbaum talks like a member of the "I-Hate-America" club. We are now a backward country, he tells us in the *Massachusetts Review*. Why are we today a backward country? Because the Communist party of the United States is not beating at the gates of political power, as it is in Italy, where, should it be admitted, it will have to turn to the backward United States of America for aid. Why do latter-day leftists in general feel impotent? As their numbers increase, their horizons narrow. The Communist parties of France and Italy—the two most important Communist parties in Western Europe—can neither take power by armed rebellion nor win majority opinion to their side. In Italy, the question this last June was not whether the Communists could set up a Communist government, but whether they would be allowed to participate, in return for a promise not to behave as Communists, in a government of the Left and Center. The ability of the mixed economies of the late capitalist states of Western Europe and America to handle many of the problems it was once assumed that only a socialist program could solve, is, I should say, the cause of leftist weakness, and also the cause of what now especially programs and characterizes it—that is to say, hate.

Herbert Marcuse, during the 60's, tried to stimulate and justify leftist hatred of modern late capitalism; against it, he claimed, any attack on the part of the proletariat, if, indeed, it had the capacity to launch such attacks, was simply bound

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to fail. But did this mean that there was anything good to be said about modern late capitalism? By no means. But was it not liberal in outlook and prospects? Didn't it both allow and encourage civil liberties? So it appeared; but, claimed Marcuse, this was *only* an appearance. The vaunted civil liberties promoted in our modern Western states were in reality the subtlest form of mass domination by the few. Marcuse even went so far as to say that the expression of interest in sex in contemporary writing was in fact a subtle form of controlling and even inhibiting its expression.

If Marcuse was right, and there were a great many people, not all of them stupid, who thought that he was, then hatred was right and proper, violent hatred even, of a system so deceptive, so brutal, and so successful as ours. During the 60's, people who expressed such hatred were in fact often loved. Today, though, one may well question whether such hatred was based on true, or merely tendentious, judgments. At the present time, however, this question is not being raised, and literary men are taking over the love of hating. And anyway, hating seems more appropriate in literature than any purely intellectual genres. Recently I've come across a play by one of the more talented of the younger English playwrights, Trevor Griffiths. The play, *The Comedians*, may be done here next year. In it, class hatred is openly held up for admiration. Four men of working-class background who have been students at a kind of professional school for comics conducted by a former great, run through their routines before a hiring agent. Two are hired, but the most brilliant is not. Why? Because, says the once great comic in charge of the school, the most brilliant of the four is still not funny enough, and this is because his routine is full of hate. But the apprentice replies that the master is now no longer capable of creating comedy himself. This is why he is now a teacher. At the outset of his career, when he was in fact great in comedy, his routines were inspired by class hatred. The image of the performer who is superior and unsuccessful because of his thorough hatred for society is, I think, a rather deeply felt image of the modern leftist who has read the clock of history and who knows how late his leftness is.

On the matter of unemployment, the late leftist can have little in common with late conservatives or late liberals. Can he at least share something with early leftists? Not very much. Early leftists did not hate the system when unemployment became widespread. You do not hate what you feel you are able to change. I do not of course mean that early leftists *liked* unemployment. They disliked it, to be sure, but what they disliked they felt could help them. Late leftists, who cannot like unemployment, do not believe, all the same, they can be helped by it. Hence, hate.

Late liberals are likely to be much less enthusiastic about forced busing than early liberals were. For early liberalism, the issue was that black children should be able to attend neighborhood schools; this is not the issue in 1976. The issue today is whether white children are to be bused to schools outside their neighborhoods and which their parents do not want them to attend. There is a further issue today, namely: is it proper under a democratic system to bring about school desegregation by court decrees? On this matter, conservatives late and early were openly critical, and now liberals have begun to be. In the New York *Times* for June 24, 1976, the liberal columnist William V. Shannon condemns the decrees of Judge Garrity of Boston, describing his qualities of zeal and ambition as "suspect in a judge." The condemnation by Shannon of Garrity's decrees, and also of the school situation which resulted from them, is as strong as anything we have heard on this issue from late conservatives, and it is is backed up by an admirable quotation from Edmund Burke, that fountainhead of conservative thinking. Surely there is evidence here of some convergence of the late liberal and late conservative views.

Early leftists, thinking it might bring an end to hatred, thought of busing as a means. Late leftists, expecting hatred will continue, now think of busing as itself an end—they defend it, not for the good that is to come of it, but because it is the "law."

Finally, there is the matter of Communists in power in Western European governments, for example, the government of Italy. Early liberals certainly would have opposed any such eventuality; but late liberals may see, in an Italian government in which the Communists play a responsible role, a historical exit of Communism as an independent political force on the Western European scene. And late conservatives, if they are intelligent—and there is no historical law which says they cannot be—may expect an Italian government in which Communists participate to raise as many problems for the Soviet Union as for the United States. So here too there can be a coming together of late liberal and late conservative views. Not every conservative is Ronald Reagan.

Early leftists would have welcomed Communists in the government of a Western European nation as promising the end of capitalism. Late leftists may well see in any such dispensation an end to promising anything socially: even with Communists in government, the mixed economy seems here to stay. We seem to have come to the end of all glorious endings; finally, there is to be no final conflict.

From which I deduce that late liberals and late conservatives can share certain limited goals, and need not always think of themselves as very far apart. On the other hand, both late conservatives and late liberals can have very little in common

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with late leftists. Can the leftist who is up-to-date at least feel that he has something in common with leftists who are now completely out-of-date? Can the late leftist even enter into conversation with the early leftist he once was or might have been? I think not. The pat positions of the one will be paradoxes to the other. Think of a present-day "I-hate-America" leftist trying to converse with the mildest non-party Browderite of the 30's, who might very well say, along with Comrade Earl, "Communism is 20th-century Americanism."

LIONEL ABEL, *playwright and critic, teaches English literature at SUNY-Buffalo.*

Elliott Abrams: In the last few presidential campaigns, the terms liberal and conservative have been robbed of their historical meanings. These labels are used today simply as weapons in political power struggles.

The misuse of the term liberal is at the heart of the problem. For several decades, and until the late 60's, the term connoted a political position which emphasized individual liberty as the highest political value. To American liberals, the concept included not only political liberty but elementary social justice, so that the American goal of equality of opportunity might be fulfilled. Only when civil liberties were respected and equal opportunity provided could the individual truly be free and in control of his own life. Today's argument about big government is, among liberals, a very difficult one precisely because big government is *both* a means of achieving social justice and a threat to individual liberty. Fidelity to liberal principles does not resolve this problem.

There is one fundamental issue, however, which fidelity to liberal principles does resolve—the issue of America's role in resisting totalitarianism around the world.

Not surprisingly, liberals have traditionally viewed totalitarianism as the gravest threat to liberty; and not surprisingly, liberals have believed that since America was free and was the strongest of the free nations, on it fell the burden of championing the cause of liberty.

In the 60's, however, what is now known as the New Politics movement arose, fueled by opposition to the war in Vietnam. Since its adherents often were, and are, former liberals, they still lay claim to the liberal label, although they dispute some of the central tenets of American liberalism. They have transformed the long-standing liberal concern for protecting civil liberties and ending racism into a belief that America is a racist, repressive society. And they have concluded that since Americans are themselves not "truly" free, America cannot be the champion of liberty.

But the New Politics view was not simply that America was not so good a society; at the time, the view became widespread that antagonistic political systems were really not so bad. Since Communists proclaim their adherence to the traditional liberal values of freedom and social justice, some portions of the liberal community have never clearly understood that Communist totalitarianism is in fact as much an enemy of liberty as is fascist totalitarianism. Thus, for decades, many well-meaning liberals refused to acknowledge the true nature of the Stalinist regime; thus, today, one can still hear it suggested that since Communist societies have national health insurance and (allegedly) no unemployment, it is difficult to say whether workers there are not "really" better off than workers here. This outlook, which was marked as a splinter view by the dismal failure of the Henry Wallace campaign in 1948, reappeared in the later 60's and early 70's as a sufficiently potent political force to seek control of the Democratic party and, indeed, in 1972, of the White House.

Precisely why this particular political view gained so markedly in popularity at just that time is not clear, but two factors surely deserve note. First, intense opposition to the Vietnam war led many to believe that a policy they thought evil could only be the product of an evil society. Second, the rapid growth of cultural relativism and the loss of the religious faith which underlay American political values, have eroded the belief that America's political ideal—liberty—is of transcendent importance.

The traditional liberal view that the distinctions between, say, Soviet society and our own are obvious and are not only political but moral in character, has been rejected.

In rejecting the absolute primacy of liberty as a political value—and in becoming, in some cases, outright apologists for the denial of liberty—the New Politics forces left liberalism far behind. The sole tie between the New Politics view and traditional American liberalism is the fact that most New Politics enthusiasts are former liberals (if they are old enough to be former anythings). Those who do not share these new "liberal" views are, of course, called—what else?—conservatives. This label is applied by the New Politics forces, who mean it as a criticism and use it as a weapon, and by the cadres of the media, who either share the New Politics outlook or are entirely ignorant of the historical meaning of liberalism in America.

DOES any of this matter? After all, recognition of a political leader as a great liberal or a great conservative has not traditionally been of much value to him. The Eisenhower victory over Mr. Conservative, Robert Taft, and for that matter the Carter victory this year, are evidence that

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success may go to those who escape the liberal and conservative tags.

However, the misuse of the term liberal to describe the New Politics forces and the labeling of traditional liberal views as conservative, do matter. For the historical traditions of American liberalism are now being used to legitimize a political position which is antithetical to it and which, without the identification with the liberal tradition, would be weaker. What is at stake here is the legitimacy of rival claims to follow in and to embody the main Democratic party tradition. It is not simply a matter of semantics; like all politics, it is a struggle for power.

ELLIOTT ABRAMS *is a young lawyer now working as special counsel to Senator Henry M. Jackson.*

Jervis Anderson: It is true, as you suggest in your questionnaire, that the terms liberal and conservative are used rather loosely today. It is also true that certain positions once associated mainly with conservatives have lately found favor among liberals, and vice versa. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that a measure of confusion now exists in many minds over who can rightly be called liberal and who, conservative. I hope I do not surprise you too much by saying that I myself have managed to avoid being confused. This is because my own standards of definition are broad and resilient enough to sustain occasional deviations; because I realize that the apparent ideological confusions we are now witnessing have occurred a number of times in the past; and because, especially where liberals are concerned, I do not find these developments at all astonishing. I offer at least three explanations of what I mean.

1. A lot may depend upon what motivates liberals and conservatives to adopt positions that are not in harmony with the history or the background of their social beliefs. In many cases, it may simply be that they have seen in these positions a new opportunity to pursue old interests. For example, the advocacy by liberals of decentralization and quotas is, indeed, problematic. It creates almost as many problems for liberals as it solves. Not the least of the problems it creates is this: suddenly called into question are both the consistency of the liberal belief in centralized administration and the integrity of what liberals have always said about the more desirable ways of achieving equality. The latter end of this wicket is probably the more sticky, because the espousal of anything resembling preferential treatment undermines the general principle of equality. However, when liberals are found taking such positions, it is often because they are stirred by plight, and are acting out of a need to remedy or correct problems which do not respond to conventional methods of solution. Conversely, when the conservatives advocate decentralization or oppose quotas, it is frequently because they are insensitive to plight, hostile to the social objectives of centralized administrations, and indifferent to the need for redress. In other words, the hand may at times be Esau's, while the voice is still Jacob's.

2. The liberal persuasion has always seemed to accommodate fairly wide shadings of social outlook; has always seemed unable to resist the challenge of untested possibilities; and, as a result, has always lent itself to a good deal of risk and experimentation. When one looks at some of the more admirable traditions and achievements in American history, politics, and literature, one can only be thankful that the liberal idea has always yielded to risk and moral adventure. On the other hand, the ruins of many of its good intentions are by no means hard to find. And yet, the mistakes and failures of liberalism—as it has sought to translate itself into public policy—are almost worth celebrating, for they were consequences of some of its most appealing traits: its openness to a diversity of progressive dispositions; its willingness to undertake uncertain searches for uncertain answers; and its awareness, as Lionel Trilling once said, of "complexity and difficulty."

3. Historically, the behavior of liberals and conservatives has not been as consistently orthodox as we may wish to believe. These days it is mostly conservatives who are fighting to place limits upon government power, but there was a time in the past when it was mostly liberals who were doing so. The Liberal party in England, as Flora Lewis reported in the New York *Times* some months ago, "is for decentralization and individualism, but considers itself more humane and compassionate than the Conservatives." And Walter Lippmann once reminded us that "The Tory party in Great Britain introduced political democracy into the British Constitution. Bismarck established social insurance in Germany. Theodore Roosevelt brought the railroads under regulation; and Woodrow Wilson, aided and abetted by William Jennings Bryan, presided over the making of the Federal Reserve System, which is now regarded by many conservatives as sacrosanct."

ALL of this brings me back to the spirit of your first two questions. Am I satisfied with the way the terms liberal and conservative are used today—in light of the ideologically contradictory positions being adopted within both camps? Because of my own standards of definition, I must reply that I am neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. What are these standards? When I try to perceive today who is liberal and who is conservative, it is not the occasional points at which ideological positions merge or blur that I take chiefly into account. It is whether, despite certain apparent contradictions, those who call themselves liberal

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and those who call themselves conservative may still be seen to be upholding the central moral values and tendencies of their faiths.

Because I believe that it is the ultimate moral differences between liberal and conservative commitment that really count—and because I am inclined to wait and see who, in the end, remains available for a defense of what is decisive to liberal and conservative conviction—I believe it matters how the terms liberal and conservative are used, or how I use these terms. What are some of these ultimate differences? I cannot sustain this point unless I also describe what, in my mind, are some of the ultimate differences between the two outlooks.

I would say that conservatives are not persuaded, on the whole, that humane ideals should influence the conduct of those who manage public affairs. Left to themselves, they would probably repeal the Bill of Rights and the philosophical premises of the American Revolution. They do not believe it is the duty of government to create what have been called "civilizing opportunities" for the general population. And their conduct, in government or in private, is more often shaped by their social irritabilities than by their social concern. Liberals look forward to making life somewhat more tolerable, somewhat more civilized, somewhat more just, and somewhat more decent for the general society. Their undertakings in the area of public policy are often animated by compassion and the instinct for redress. It is their conviction that social goals should be pursued democratically. They believe that government is the most effective instrument for providing the conditions under which social problems can be solved; and that civil liberties, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press are indispensable to the survival of a civilized community. Finally, even when many liberals do not realize it, they belong to a tradition which, as Irving Howe has said, draws deeply upon "the political promise of democratic socialism" and "the ethical substance" of Christianity and the Old Testament.

JERVIS ANDERSON, *a member of the* New Yorker *staff, is the author of* A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait.

Josiah Lee Auspitz: An important truth about partisan labels is to be found in Gulliver's account of the politics of Lilliput, where the rival factions at court were distinguished by the high and low heels on their shoes. To agitate the body politic the king had only to alter his own heels the merest fraction of an inch. His son, the heir to the throne, careful to keep his options open, wore one high heel and one low heel, which made him walk with a hobble.

Gulliver also records an earlier and less tractable dispute between the Big-endians and the Small-endians, so named from the method of cutting open their morning egg. Six armed rebellions had raged over which end of the egg should stand upright in a cup, and the losing faction, its books banned from Lilliput, continued to foment subversion from exile in the rival kingdom.

That the egg controversy led to civil war, while the heel issue remained political, conveys a lesson. With the height of heels it is always a matter of degree, whereas for the end of an egg one must definitively opt. Peaceful is the land in which the eristical questions are those of more and less rather than those of either/or.

By this test, Americans can be grateful for partisan terms like Left and Right, liberal and conservative, that permit a reasonable man to hobble. Instead of demanding logical consistency in the positions which opportunity may commend to the two sides, we should give thanks for the simple fact that there are two sides, each resourceful enough to assure a shifting middle ground. The alternative, after all, is a politics preoccupied with "objective" and unbridgeable categories of race, religion, language, tribe, region, and class. Better the quaint designations of the early Girondist and mid-Victorian periods than the unadorned and frozen hatreds of contemporary Lebanon, Cyprus, Cuba, Nigeria, Cambodia, Rhodesia, Argentina, and the Sudan.

American political labels share a second advantage with those of Lilliput: they give the intelligentsia something to be agitated about. Social scientists can busy themselves correlating statistical indices of left- and right-wingedness; historians, reading the labels backward into the past, can hunt for precursors; journalists can be struck voluble affixing these terms to new electoral moods. And each of us in our own lives can identify impulses that we choose to call radical, moderate, liberal, or conservative, and can thus feel our humble struggles reflected in the Olympian maneuvers of high politics. If all this sounds more diverting than profound, consider the alternatives. Consider how minds devoted to the scholasticism of power might otherwise occupy themselves.

A third advantage is more peculiarly American, for the use of ideological markers helps to correct a deficiency in our Constitution. Aside from the President, we have no officials elected at large (and under the electoral-college system even the President plans his campaign not to win a direct national mandate but to assemble localized majorities in a coalition of states). Yet in an increasingly national polity merely geographical representation cannot suffice. It must be supplemented with nonterritorial and proportional devices. Talk of a one-dimensional, European-style, Left-Right spectrum has facilitated one such adaptation. A Senator, for example, whose abilities exceed the meager resources of a small state like Arizona, South Dakota,

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or Idaho can find a larger constituency by becoming the spokesman for a national left- or right-wing movement. Voters who are in a permanent minority in their state or district can then look to such a representative as their own.

Under the banners of liberalism and conservatism there have, in fact, assembled not only officeholders but political infrastructures, complete with publications, youth organizations, think tanks, citizen-action groups, and acquired places in universities, foundations, corporations, and news media. Such factional groupings enjoy a greater purity of purpose than the Republican and Democratic parties and operate without many of the legal and tax disabilities. To the extent that the terms liberal and conservative have any concrete referent in American politics, it is to these elite networks and to the issues their members choose to emphasize.

In the past generation, the most familiar issues have reflected material interests—with the Right favoring free enterprise and the Left the cause of labor and the welfare state. But such lines of cleavage have been unsettled by the increasing number of citizens who seek moral rather than economic forms of patronage from government (and who, recent studies show, now rival business and labor as sources of political funding). At the same time, accommodations among government, corporate, academic, and union leaders have removed many economic questions from the political to the managerial sphere and have changed others from class to sectional conflicts. The simultaneous growth of corporatism among our leaders and civism among our people has robbed the old labels of their saliency.

YET it is perhaps the most important advantage of our catchwords that they point beyond themselves, in a way that makes them open to reinterpretation. They convey intimations of profundity that invite historical and philosophical reflection. They thus set us on a road that leads out of Lilliput, beyond the merely disputatious aspects of our politics to the larger considerabilities from which we can gain rootedness and perspective.

Traveling this road even a short distance, we soon come to see America as the carrier of a powerful idea of freedom, with respect to which we are all liberals, all conservatives, all radicals, all moderates.

It is to the humane ideal of self-determination itself and to the magnanimity of spirit befitting the free citizen that the noble term "liberal" is properly applied. Those measures are liberal which extend the conditions of human freedom. Since these conditions are in part material, liberalism has naturally come to demand limits not only on government but on those uses of private property that inhibit the positive exercise of citizenship. (Slavery is the most dramatic example, but by no means an isolated one.)

Preserving the prerequisites to a regime of freedom is, for its part, a "conservative" project. Even the most rudimentary procedural justice is impossible without habits of rectitude inculcated outside politics. We are all conservatives to the extent that we seek to safeguard the deeper moral habits on which liberty depends and to defend against criminality and aggression the social order in which these mores inhere.

There is, moreover, a "radical" thrust to all this. For what is being conserved in America is something more than classical liberalism, with its implicit reliance on the restraining role of a stable aristocracy. America is dedicated to the proposition of universal equality: that all human beings have equal rights to a voice in their own governance. The principle supports demands for democratization not only in government but in the workplace, the church, the school, even the family.

The American concept of equality also contains the grounds for the "moderation" of its own radicalism: for it holds men equal not only in liberty but in depravity and fallibility—in the potential to abuse any power that they gain. Hence every exercise of power must be carefully balanced, checked and hemmed in by rules. We may have a "democratic" ideal but our moderate instincts tell us to express it through "republican" institutions.

There is, in sum, no necessary contradiction among the several tendencies in the American political tradition. But there is inevitable conflict. For those aspects of an ideal that the political philosopher sees as complementary have their practical limits established by partisan struggle. So, though we may all be liberals and conservatives, radicals and moderates, democrats and republicans, it is only human that we should designate ourselves as one or the other. And as the politics of Lilliput remind us, it is only prudent.

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William Barrett: The country is indeed sliding away from liberal/conservative stereotypes, but toward what? Much has been made of a general drift toward conservatism, but this movement, real enough, has to be qualified by another fact that hasn't been so well noticed. The most conservative of the candidates in the primaries, Ronald Reagan, was not so conservative as Goldwater in 1964. Indeed, that year, '64, may well mark the last time that any candidate was able to attack the idea of welfare as such; and in fact Goldwater could not maintain the position throughout his campaign. Henceforth, the welfare state is a permanent part of our poli-

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tical and social life, and the only quarrel among politicians will be over the question of administering it.

But the hard facts of administration do not kindle ideological fires. Democratic capitalism, plus the welfare state, certainly looks like a more efficacious and safe way to realize what we used fondly to call our "socialist ideals." All the historical facts point that way, but they are not likely to be heeded. I expect intellectual debate will become much more polarized around the question of socialism. In any case, the crypto-socialists among liberals will have to come out of the closet.

FOR my generation, liberalism was a secondary issue to socialism. As young Marxists, we looked down on liberals as wishy-washy and uncommitted, though they might occasionally be useful as allies. Later, when we were anti-Stalinists, the liberals had become enemies because they were deliberately concealing the facts about the Soviet Union. Surely this must be accounted one of the more bizarre chapters of liberal history. They did not become socialists when they had their chance; and thereafter, out of some obscure sense of atonement, defended the most illiberal of regimes because it claimed to be socialist.

What we now know as the liberal establishment emerged later. (Yes, it exists; no, it is not an organization or conspiracy, but a pervasive climate of opinion, and no less potent for that.) Most of those who move within the establishment never encountered Marxism or the Russian Revolution as live issues. They know all about the Soviet dictatorship, of course, but would rather not think about it, and therefore dislike Solzhenitsyn. Why can't the man shut up? But history returns to plague us in the questions we have not thought through. Hence the liberal yearning, the eager will to believe that, if not in Russia, then elsewhere one of the latter manifestations of Communism will indeed be the Second Coming.

At the moment Italian Communism is the particular pet of some liberals. Television recently gave it a special show, which illustrated among other things the powers of distortion and of truth peculiar to the visual media. Fast and slick cuts made life in Bologna look like one gay whirl. (It is, in fact, one of the more stolid and dull of the Italian cities.) But the revealing moment was an interview with the mayor in his office. Speaking directly into the camera, he explained in labored but accurate English that the West had nothing to fear from Italian Communism, that this Communism was indeed different, and believed in political democracy and civil liberties. Behind him on the wall—and here the camera could tell its own truth—was a life-sized picture of Lenin.

Imagine a neo-fascist party that wins attention by its efficient organization and social concern. Its leader explains to us that this is a very different fascism from the past because it supports liberty and democracy. While he is talking, we are looking at a life-sized photo of Adolf Hitler on the wall behind him.

Would we believe him?

It is easy to promise liberty before you have the instruments of power in your hands. Easier still when your ideology has never given thought to the political problem of limiting power. Under socialism the people own the means of production. Who then owns the owners? Neither Marx nor Lenin faced this question. Marxism has a view of history and a sociology, but no political philosophy: no theory that deals with the problem of power as such, in its various modes and above all the mode of limiting it. Why should it? Political institutions, after all, were only the superstructure for vested interests. Make the revolution, establish collective ownership, and there is nothing to worry about. If men were angels, Madison observed, they would not have to worry about the forms of government. Lenin decided we were angels, and announced that the state would wither away. And no one is more ruthless than a utopian when he has the reins of power in his hands. The Russian Revolution didn't go off the road; it ran right along the tracks of the theory. The evil was at the root of Marxism itself.

Capitalism too has its own evils, which probably annoy us more because we see ourselves in them; but we are not obliged to love it. The corporations are greedy; they will chisel, gouge, and generally be as corrupt as they can get away with. So will organized labor, but I don't find that an argument for abolishing unions. Better to pit one form of corruption (power) against another, while we on the sidelines are free to bitch about both. To strike a sobering note amid our bicentennial exuberance, we might recall that our American legacy also includes that profound piece of political theory, Federalist 51, in which Madison argues for the separation of powers just on these grounds of the corrupt tendencies of human nature. And he was worried about limitations of power merely within government, while the economic sector and private property were to be left unfettered. To consolidate all power, economic and political, is a step that must inevitably be fatal to liberty.

But if I am conservative about the political forms of our liberty, I think we can be much bolder within their framework. So I am not altogether happy with conservatives either. We owe neoconservative intellectuals a debt for having rediscovered classical political theory. That is a considerable step beyond our Marxist generation. But sometimes they give me the impression that they are content merely to sit on their discovery.

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Robert L. Bartley: The language is full of words that are tricky to define in isolation but totally untroublesome in context. Are you satisfied with the way terms like bright and dull are used in contemporary discourse? The knife is bright; the knife is dull.

Despite the trickiness of defining a liberal or conservative position on this or that issue, I do not find the words troublesome in context. If in the context of contemporary discourse I am told that someone has become more liberal or more conservative, the statement seems to me to have a rough but reasonably reliable meaning. Certainly it does not leave me in the utter bafflement I feel when people continue to describe themselves as socialists even after sad experience has disabused them of belief in government ownership of the means of production.

It's futile to try to fix a living language along any single axis, but for me at least the liberal-conservative distinction has a historical core that endures today. At the heart the issue is epistemological. Does one learn primarily from theory, or primarily from experience?

The liberal temperament has always been to seek some grand abstraction from which all else flows, with which all else can be ordered. To take the historical examples, Rousseau had his State of Nature and his General Will, Bentham had the Utility Principle and his "Felicific Calculus."

For the contrasting conservative temperament, listen to Burke: "Nothing universal can be rationally affirmed on any moral or any political subject. Pure metaphysical abstraction does not belong to these matters. The lines of morality are not like the ideal lines of mathematics. They are broad and deep as well as long. They admit of exceptions; they demand modifications. These exceptions and modifications are not made by the process of logic, but by the rules of prudence."

Thus, "Politics ought to be adjusted, not to human reasonings, but to human nature, of which reason is but a part, and by no means the greatest part." The British Constitution was not "struck out at an heat by a set of presumptuous men," but "is the result of the thoughts of many minds in many ages." And, "The whole scheme of our mixed Constitution is to prevent any one of its principles from being carried as far as, taken by itself, and theoretically, it would go."

Much becomes clear if you apply this historical distinction to contemporary liberalism and conservatism. That is, if you think of the distinction not in terms of social or political programs, but primarily in terms of a clash between two epistemological temperaments.

In particular, the fickleness of the liberals' political program is best understood as the result of their search for the philosophers' stone. One week the prescription is vinegar and molasses, but if constantly increasing doses of that fail to turn society and human nature into gold, the next week the prescription will be changed to sulphur and oil of vitriol. It is not the prescription that matters but the search.

Thus, if equality under the law does not solve all racial problems, the liberal feels compelled to press for something new, like quotas. If economic growth does not lead to the perfect society, the prescription becomes an end to growth. If centralization doesn't work miracles, maybe decentralization will. If internationalism doesn't bring peace to the world, isolationism must be the answer.

As one would expect from the underlying temperament, the conservative position is far less volatile. Conservatives who argued for less government yesterday do not argue for more government today. But their position does evolve, particularly in response to experience. Some of the liberals' abstractions are indeed necessary in the trial and error through which progress is made. Now and again one of them will actually work out in experience, and accordingly will be absorbed into the conservative position.

The best historic example is found in the abstractions offered by Adam Smith. For nearly two centuries adherents to *The Wealth of Nations* were called liberals; in Continental Europe they still are today. But in contemporary U.S. discourse, Smith's followers are called conservatives. They follow proven experience, while the liberals have marched off to a tune of a newer abstraction, the Keynesian multiplier. This elegant abstraction has the advantage of fitting nicely into computers, though it is having a bit of trouble explaining the simultaneous unemployment and inflation of the latest business cycle.

FINALLY, yes, it does matter how these terms are used today. Their usage causes great personal anguish to people who recognize that in recent years liberal abstractions have been pushed to silly extremes, who correctly see the conservative temperament as all the more needed in the hectic society we are increasingly becoming, but who learned at mother's breast that liberals are the good guys.

Now, this was not a bad lesson to learn for someone growing up before 1954. Joe McCarthy was not a very attractive fellow, and he seemed to have all conservatives bullied (though he never would have existed if liberals had faced up to Alger Hiss's guilt). Conservatives so often seemed to defend vested interests, seeking personal advancement. Most importantly, a great piece of national reform remained to be done, and conservatism had been appropriated as a cover for segregationism. Naturally, a man of sensibility and wit was attracted to the liberal side.

Much has changed since 1954. Great progress has been made on the racial issue, and I know of no conservative who would like to go backward. Indeed, with racial quotas liberals have once

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again pushed a single idea too far. Conservatives have done a far better job of containing their extremists than the liberals have in containing theirs. The liberals have developed an anti-establishment establishmentarianism that shows that no ideology has a monopoly on pettiness, small-mindedness, or intolerance. The self-seeking programs of the New Class show that liberals have their own vested interests.

It may be too much to contend that the same qualities of sensibility and wit that pushed in the liberal direction in 1954 push in the opposite one today. But someone whose political feelings were not fixed by that date will not find a strong association between ideology and such personal qualities as intelligence, moderation, and open-mindedness. If one has to be something today, the term conservative is nothing to fear.

ROBERT L. BARTLEY *is the editor of the editorial page of the* Wall Street Journal.

David T. Bazelon: The current use of the word liberal just sort of happened. Nobody thought it out ahead of time. So far from making historical sense, the 19th-century liberal—out of John Stuart Mill, perhaps—would today be called a true conservative. This inversion, however, may be appropriate, to honor the rushing passage of time. But certainly it is additionally unhelpful in finding one's way in and around an already messy political situation.

The mess in America begins, I suggest, with the Mugwumps and other agents of citizen disappointment in the fulfillment of the Big Ideas of the Fathers. They set some elements of a pattern which has persisted; perhaps they initiated the departure from the definitions of classical liberalism. From the Mugwumps to the Progressives, civil-service reform was The Issue for a full generation, although I suspect that the low-grade, off-the-street character of the big capitalist winners was as obnoxious—certainly as contrary to the Fathers' vision of the Republic—as the irresponsible office-filling of politicians, in the manner of Jackson's men, and the grandiose thieving of Grant's servitors. The Progressives added clean elections to the agenda, and even held hands with Populist trust-busting. But underneath, they just didn't cotton to immigrants. Especially the recent ones who made money and won elections.

On the subject of how American liberalism happened, the foregoing merely presaged the New Deal. That was the big event that matured the special meanings we are now discussing. (Incidentally, Roosevelt—the prime mover—was much concerned to collect as many Progressives as he could: e.g., Harold Ickes.) I don't recall the word being used much in earlier writing the way it comes to be used thereafter. Indeed, it doesn't seem to have been an important word at all—just something like "a man of liberal views" occasionally, meaning cultural as much as political. (And the word in that phrase might as readily have been "advanced" or "progressive," suggesting a happy belief in scientific progress.) What distinguishes the word in and after the New Deal period is that it quickly became very important indeed. Let's say, dominant.

The Stalinists never liked the word. (Remember "confused liberal"?) Under Popular Front duress, they preferred "Progressive" and even "Forward-Looking Social Forces."

One big reason, maybe the main reason, the word has had so special a course in this country is that, at the time of the Great Depression, it was chosen to fill the void left by the default of socialism here. The competition to fill the void was between that inappropriate term and Stalinist bull about Jefferson and Paine out of Howard Fast and like that. "Liberal," if you could withstand the assault, was a term of honor—"democratic socialist" being an immigrant with an accent, hardly knowing where to get what to eat in this strange place, much less elected to anything nice.

A true conservative in America, if there is one—indeed, in any modern place—is a person who, facing our century's extreme set of difficulties, relies fundamentally on the better elements of the ruling group, or what purports to be one, to see him and us through. He distrusts most everything else. I can't imagine any different serious political meaning, currently, to which one might apply that ancient word. A true liberal in America—yes, Irving, there are some—is one who, seeing that we have and have had the most irresponsible and unseeing ruling groups of any great power in all of modern civilized human history, therefore tries to make it up as he goes along. America is still a mining camp, you understand. Hardly anybody of any real significance in running this country today attempts to honor even his great-grandfather in so doing. (The majority of our bosses know next to nothing of their grandfathers.)

At this moment, we need not be too concerned with true conservatives and true liberals. If there are any, they are not yet important. What is big right now is the default of the New Deal liberal establishment in the 60's in the face of the student or youth rebellion, and the reaction to that series of events by those winners and near-winners in the workings of the liberal establishment who cannot bear so serious a disappointment at so serious a stage of their so seriously engaged-in careers.

They now constitute themselves as the New Conservatives. They are the smartest such since the Early Days: therefore, *very* significant. (Some

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of them even used to be friendly to me.) But this maneuver puts up front the decisive orientation-issue of the New Class, in its American manifestation: *when* are they careerist, in *what* are they not? Here in the university environment where I now live, the issue is so easy to see that most often I must shield my eyes from the very glaring sun. Apparently, the obvious is more difficult in New York City, where I lived so much, so long ago.

IN CONCLUSION: Why did the Jews come to America, if this was all they were going to do? I often ask myself this (for my father, as well as myself). After all, who is more Jewish? The talmudic denizen? The fiercest defender of Israel—my almost-country, right or wrong? Saul Bellow—the classiest survivor of the Depression generation? Irwin Shaw—the richest? Irving Howe—the most frequent? Isaac Rosenfeld—the longest dead? Robert Warshow—deadest too soon? Clement Greenberg—the farthest out? Harold Rosenberg—the deepest in? Philip Rahv—who died with a suspicious foot still on the boat? Maybe Dwight Macdonald, God help us?

Who is this American Jew who is now supposed to celebrate his personal achievement in this half-assed country by presuming to become a conservative, yet? Hold your water, boys. You may need it. The fire next time.

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Arnold Beichman: Forty years ago, Earl Browder, the then unpurged secretary of the American Communist party, unfurled a banner in the old Madison Square Garden which announced: "Communism is 20th-century Americanism."

In view of the fact that the Old and New Left are revising their political opinions about the American polity, it may well be time for William F. Buckley, Jr., and with more reason than Browder, to unfurl a banner with the slogan: "Conservatism is 20th-century Americanism." Suddenly, conservatism (and I don't mean the Republican party) has become popular and, what is not always a concomitant variable, respectable.

IN the last few years, we have witnessed the following politico-cultural phenomena:

A cultural radical like Charles Reich in *The Greening of America* blamed the New Deal not only for helping to create an inhuman corporate state but also for helping to create "a new consciousness that believed primarily in domination and the necessity for living under domination."

William Appleman Williams, the demi-god of revisionist historians, a few years ago memorialized Herbert Hoover as the man who "outlined our future in 1923." Hoover, said Williams, was victimized "by his faith in the dream of a cooperative American community. The trouble with him was that he believed. Not just in us. But in the very best of us."

Professor Williams also called for an affirmative reassessment of much of the American conservative tradition so that its values and ideas might be incorporated into an American socialist ideology.

Richard Flacks, an SDS founder who a mere six years ago was warning that a revolution might be necessary, now says that "no existing social system seems capable of realizing the moral hopes of the Left," that the New Left in "advanced capitalist societies [is] out of touch with the concrete potentialites of historical reality." In his lament, Flacks calls upon the Left "realistically" to study "how much American workers have *won* over the last fifty years" (emphasis in original). Flacks might find confirmation of his finding in the latest Communist *Daily World* slogan: "No Taxes on Family Incomes Under $25,000."

The overwhelming defeat of the 1972 Democratic presidential candidate was due to a widespread perception that he was allied with "cultural radicalism [and] a general antagonism to the basic social order." So ran the post-election analysis by Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab in COMMENTARY ("The Election and the National Mood," January 1973).

The results of the 1976 presidential primaries, the nominating conventions, and the party platforms confirm for me that we are watching the prairie-fire spread of a counter-counterculture which is strongly supported by a broad constituency of voters.

Nathan Glazer in 1970 asked how it was that a radical like himself up to the late 50's ended up as "a conservative, a mild conservative, but still closer to those who call themselves conservative than to those who call themselves liberal in early 1970."

Daniel Bell tells us that "the death of socialism is the unrealized fact of the century." Or, as *Barron's* reported last June, the Bank Handlowy Warszawie of Poland has just borrowed $75 million for five years from a consortium of Spanish banks.

I am writing this on the twenty-third anniversary of the anti-Soviet uprising in East Germany and by the time this is published it will be the twentieth anniversary of the anti-Soviet uprising in Hungary, and the first anniversary of Helsinki and the White House refusal to receive Alexander Solzhenitsyn. All these events occurred during conservative Republican administrations which actively discouraged support for East European rebellions while claiming to be for "rollback" of

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Soviet power as against traitorous "containment."

IT is easy to see why terms like liberal or conservative are misused so frequently that not even a contextual definition can help clarify their meaning. There is no unitary idea which attaches either to liberalism or conservatism. Liberals and conservatives are not system-builders. What one calls oneself in politics—assuming you are not a political hopeful seeking a party nomination—is a matter of aesthetics and upbringing.

Liberalism and conservatism are essentially traditions, and as Michael Polanyi once said, it is in the nature of a tradition to remain unformulated. Yet traditions like these can be transmitted by the personal apprenticeship of succeeding generations. Conservatism and liberalism no longer, if they ever did, represent ideological polarities.

I would go further and argue that both traditions have been on a convergence course since the rise of the New Left in the late 60's. Perhaps this convergence can be summarized in a phrase of Richard Chase describing the best in American literature: "conservative impulse, radical idea." When one reads the texts of William Rusher and Patrick J. Buchanan urging a conservative secession from the Republican party, the phrase takes on dramatically concrete political meaning. It was Rusher a few years ago who pointed out after the early Nixon years that "a Republican President simply demobilizes conservatism in the United States." And it was Eugene D. Genovese, the Marxist-Leninist (so he says!) intellectual, who in the pages of *National Review* described President Nixon's "right-wing liberalism [as] the counterpart of the Communist party's left-wing liberalism—that is, each advances solutions within the established consensus of liberal social policy."

We have moved in the past decade from an American version of lib-lab to something which I would call "lib-con." The convergence of the two traditions stems from the following phenomena:

The unifying force of anti-Communism and particularly anti-Sovietism.

The short-term intractability of socioeconomic problems in the democracies so that neither liberal nor conservative solutions seem to work as they should.

The now-prevalent certainty that socialism requires a full-fledged party dictatorship for its effectuation, that socialism therefore leads inevitably to *gulag*-ism. Revolution and revolutionism —particularly in the age of terrorism—are no longer envisioned as useful alternatives to law and order.

The all-out attack on Israel has created a vast disillusionment with the UN and subsidiary internal agencies like UNESCO. Once it was the ultra-conservatives who were outspokenly anti-UN. Today, the UN's dwindling band of true believers are apologetic about the UN.

Withdrawal and even disengagement of the liberal tradition from American trade unionism has hastened the lib-con convergence. There are exceptions to this event, like Daniel P. Moynihan, but they are few.

A resistance to the universe of anti-meritocratic egalitarianism à la John Rawls. There is lib-con agreement against affirmative action.

OTHER examples could be offered in support of a theory of lib-con convergence. What has come about in the U.S. is a diminution of what Francis Hope once described as "the instinctive leftishness of educated people." Politico-cultural differences will continue, of course, but they will no longer be the crucial differences they once were. After all, there were large doctrinal disagreements among the authors of the Constitution in 1787 but still they emerged with an acceptable document.

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Pearl K. Bell: The word liberal is rooted in an idea of openness and optimism, of looking forward in the cause of progress; the word conservative in the will to preserve. Both liberal and conservative are usually construed in their political and economic sense, as dealing with the distribution of privileges or the character of hierarchy, but this highly specific usage is not the one that interests me. Rather, I prefer to consider what these tattered inconstant labels seem to denote about a person's temperament, as expressed in his cultural attitudes, and to deal not with society but with the intellectual community. To what extent do these words imply a certain receptivity or resistance to cultural change, drawing upon temperamental qualities that welcome or feel distrustful of such change, or reject it altogether?

From this perspective, liberal traditionally signified the person who is self-determining, not determined by exterior forces, and even transcending this Kantian idea with an often indiscriminate tolerance for all varieties of intellectual independence, sometimes at the expense of judgment. Conservatives have tended to emphasize tradition, continuity, and judgment shaped by an awareness of necessary limits.

Yet, as Lionel Trilling argued with instructive lucidity more than a quarter of a century ago in *The Liberal Imagination*, abstract definitions of the liberal commitments often fail to take into account the conflict between the ideal, embracing unlimited variousness and possibility of thought and experience, particularly as they are manifest in works of art, and the impulse to become dogmatic in an adversary stance.

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Most oppressively in the past fifteen years or so, this latter tendency of liberalism has misled its adherents by moving them closer to self-righteousness in their insistence on acceptable truth, and liberals have allowed themselves to acquiesce uncritically in modish opinion and the latest fashions in heroes and underdogs. Buttressed by this collective intellectual authority, they encouraged the devouring imperatives of personal authenticity and the untrammeled self. Yet with no awareness of inconsistency, they have been aggressively hostile to any deviating voices of cultural opinion, while unable to establish any rational limits for their ideology of the Left, the good, and the true.

BUT nothing, and liberalism perhaps least of all, remains the same for very long in a restless America. After the exalted chaos of the 60's, many liberals became far less predictable and automatic in their responses to social and cultural change. The issues, they realized, were no longer single-dimensional, and exposed a conflict of values that could not easily be resolved with the older shibboleths of progress. The uncontrolled appetites of the deified self, raging through the 60's, in the end dismayed and frightened liberals who had thought themselves tolerant, and more than that in some cases, of the counterculture.

The most unexpected way in which liberal complacencies were confounded arose from the women's movement. In the most dramatic turnabout, Jane Alpert, revolutionary bomber, emerged from hiding and surrendered to capitalist law because her male revolutionary comrades remained as sexist underground as they had habitually behaved above. Women's liberation as a sociocultural issue cut directly across political radicalism as a socioeconomic issue—and for the radical women, sex, not economics, was now the issue of power.

In the reforming of American education, the liberals, it was assumed, would brook no compromise with the necessity of busing schoolchildren in order to achieve school desegregation. But busing also brought that same staunch liberal smack up against a conflicting piety, argued passionately by Jane Jacobs in the early 60's—that of community control, which would preserve the cultural coherence and singularity of the autonomous urban neighborhood. Yet liberals are also repelled by the prospect of seeming to agree with the intransigent racists of South Boston on the question of busing. Where does this contradiction of ideals leave the liberal? With a more intelligent grasp, one would hope, of the thorny complexity in moral dilemmas.

Neither did anyone foresee that many Jewish liberals, who indeed call themselves socialists, would support Senator Jackson in this year's presidential primaries. Yet they did so because their cultural and emotional identification, as Jews, with the state of Israel proved more urgently decisive than their distaste for Jackson's support of American intervention in Vietnam. Despite their long and intractable opposition to the Vietnam war, and their ideological commitment to détente, the survival of Israel seemed in the end more crucial.

For many liberals the open-admissions policy of the City University of New York had also become seriously problematic, given their belief in cultural standards. On the one hand it was unthinkable to exclude the poor and neglected and ill-taught from the benefits of higher education. But if such education ceased to be higher by having to devote so much time to remedial reading, open admissions could only become a threat to the health of both education and culture, and assume the sinister form of an anti-intellectual assault on hard-won intellectual criteria for learning and even for literacy. How could a liberal with a lifelong commitment to the sanctity of high culture countenance its erosion in the name of racial and economic equality?

It was in fact this agonizing dilemma of education that first turned Kingsley Amis, a radical young writer in postwar England, in the increasingly conservative direction of middle-aged Tory. For he found the importunate expectations of English education, calling for more schools, more colleges, more students and courses and buildings, insupportable in the face of the dismaying corollary—that in the world of the university, more is, alas, less.

Yet Amis also exemplifies a distressing tendency of Anglo-American conservative thought. However much I agree with him about the nature of a university, he sometimes seems afflicted these days with hardening of the moral arteries, and I distrust this willful incorrigibility as much as I distrust the liberal impulse to dogmatic conformity in the name of progress. In Amis's recent biography of Kipling, he adopts a tone toward Kipling's fictional account of his traumatic childhood, the unbearably painful story "Baa Baa Black Sheep," that smacks of the drill-sergeant's contempt for the rookie's "softness." Granted that Kipling may have exaggerated his brutal memories, as writers inevitably alter experience in the transformations of literature. But Amis's conservative rigidity here makes him sour and hardhearted, dismissing "Baa Baa Black Sheep" as self-indulgence. Surely this is as reprehensible as liberal sentimentality at the opposite extreme. As Lionel Trilling so often sought to persuade us, extremism of any kind is the enemy of the humane imagination.

CAN we, then, knowing how feeble and inadequate and simplistically reductive the words liberal and conservative frequently prove themselves to be, live without these labels? However slippery and misguided they are, I think not. For in an indispensable way, these terms point to

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culturally significant differences of temperament among human beings, as they respond to the promise, or the threat, of change. As long as we continue to think and feel in dissimilar ways about the nature of progress and the survival of culture, we will display the nature of our temperament—leading us either toward experiment and openness or toward continuity and tradition. And we need the words that enable us, however imperfectly, to make these crucial intellectual distinctions.

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Ronald Berman: If in fact the tendency of democracy is toward more equality then its discourse will follow pretty close behind. Language is no more imprecise than idea, and it certainly conforms to habit. History is a very bad example for stability: in *The Taming of the Shrew* Baptista Minola said that he wanted to be "liberal" to his daughter Kate and meant only that he intended to be generous. After that, the word came to mean tolerant, honest, or cultured. Jefferson associated it with laxity, Gibbon with openness, Macaulay with learning, and Lord Chesterfield with refinement. Gilbert and Sullivan thought it belonged in politics—Morris Udall differs. But change has been accelerated for us, and the normal reasons for a Great Vowel Shift or a linguistic revolution work in ever shorter generations. There are social pressures that distort our own uses and usage.

Although terms like liberal and conservative are misused, I think there are some special reasons for that. It used to be said of American life that it was intellectually on the Left and emotionally on the Right; that our ideas were enlightened while our sympathies, weighed down by the inertia of family and region, tended to keep us in equilibrium. In literature and mass culture, in the mythology of stage and screen, ideas of change and progress were validated, while feelings about the past or about stability itself were discredited. The reverse is now true: we suspect the realism of our ideas but accept the validity of our impulses.

But those impulses are no longer directed toward the institutions of the past. They are focused on the self, perceived as the logical place for something called development, the atavistic form of which is morality. It has come to be accepted that the self is immune from a great deal of judgment and the standards don't really apply to the decisions of the will. So that while a typical figure of a generation or two ago as described by Eugene O'Neill or Sinclair Lewis was inhibited by old American virtues but liberated by ideas, a typical figure right now is a man or woman of some intellectual pretensions whose world of ideas has been disproved, who has only the consolation of higher consciousness. A tired radical, perhaps, who has seen the end of his revolution, in some ménage whose disorder reflects liberation. Or, better yet, a middle-aged lady from Scarsdale who votes Republican, but who knows that while any historical idea is suspect, her own fulfillment transcends norms and values, and must always be open to change. She has no trouble voting on the Right and living, at least metaphorically, on the Left. It is no wonder that the *terms* are confused.

CULTURE used to be defined as a set of institutions and is now an array of feelings. It is entirely possible for the high middle class to be opposed to quotas—and very much committed to the belief that equality is the most important public value. Or to dislike affirmative action while believing that there really are few distinctions between the sexes. Or to believe in "values"—and simultaneously to approve a conception of art as performance or entertainment, and a standard about individual sexual behavior just about entirely relativistic. Part of this is a result of confusion and part of circumstance. The parent who finds a child addicted to drugs reinvents a standard with which he can live. And the man who looks to the ordinary sources of moral judgment like church or media finds there a repeated pattern of powerful political certainty and moral relativism. Our ideas have been sequentially disappointed but our feelings remain. And in any case the latter have been politicized; that is, they have come under the dispensation of democratic individualism.

There is a fundamental displacement throughout the democratic process. More or less consistently, political precedent becomes adapted to cultural situations. An amendment designed to protect individuals is invoked by classes; another intended to restrain government is applied to sublimated adversary institutions like corporations or schools. Or families. Or marriage. Rights become conceived of as legitimated desires, capable of being extended to children, animals, even the landscape. There is a simultaneous adaptation of responsibilities: what used to be moral is now political. It leads to odd situations because moral discourse is always presumed to base itself upon fixed values—but soon becomes relative. I don't think that language can be any better organized than ideas; both become situational at roughly the same time.

A variety of very good (and amusing) distinctions have been made to test liberalism and conservatism. The former has meant anything from New Deal statism to concern for individual rights: a combination anomalous, contradictory, but evidently satisfying. Conservatism recently

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meant respect for the past, for local institutions, and for the limits of the Constitution. But both terms find it difficult to apply to the present realm of culture. In fact, they tend now to coincide about political meanings, insofar as both reject increased governmental spending and authority. But neither has much accuracy or authority of its own in dealing with the other realm of culture that I have suggested, that of individual "rights" and feelings. They are not really appropriate to a culture that merges a diminished public and an expanded private sense of self. Regulation affects public life and constrains it. But private life is a fantasy of absolute freedom. More laws and more pornography. Less public and more private satisfactions. Those whose ideas are realized in this way are not only beyond Good and Evil—they are beyond liberal and conservative.

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Norman Birnbaum: COMMENTARY's questions raise, once again, the need for a new political discourse—a language which can, at least, state our problems. Arguing about these in the terms of conservatism and liberalism is a certain way to miss most historical points. I began to write these notes in Paris, where a government which propagated the idea of an "advanced liberal society" is in serious difficulty. Its parliamentarians objected to a capital-gains tax, some because it was too rigorous, others because it was insufficiently so. The government is denounced as reactionary by an oppositional coalition of Communists, Socialists, radicals, Left Catholics (and Left Gaullists). The coalition itself lacks philosophical coherence, whatever degree of immediate tactical unity it may attain. The Communists, in particular, have appealed to both Christians and Gaullists to join them in a new union—not of the Left but of the French people. In a comical footnote to all of this, our embassy has been attempting to persuade the Socialists (at first amused, and now contemptuous and irritated) that they should seek an alliance with the "liberals"—without being able to indicate who, precisely, may be liberal in contemporary France. Decidedly, de Maistre's and de Tocqueville's compatriots do not find a recourse to the terms conservative and liberal very useful.

It is sometimes said that our own society is different, an incarnation of liberal values so pure that all of us (from George Wallace and William F. Buckley, Jr., to Tom Hayden and Michael Harrington) are liberals, quarrelsome liberals perhaps, but liberals. Generalizations of that sort are sometimes tautological (and, therefore, almost useless). In this case, the assertion is incorrect. At the beginning, in colonial and revolutionary America, struggles between the conservative and liberal traditions were as important as contemporaneous conflicts in Western Europe—as the newer scholarship on the American Revolution shows. Liberalism triumphed, if only after the defeat of a peculiarly indigenous version of conservatism defended by the Confederated States. With that triumph, the substance of political discussion altered, however similar some of its terms remained. We are now well along in another major change of substantial argument: this time it would pay us, for many reasons, to change our terms as well.

The original antithesis between conservative and liberal politics is, of course, specifically Western European. Conservatives defended not an organic vision of society, but the institutions which alone made sense of that vision. A society divided into estates, families ordered by patriarchy, communities resting on a closed durability, were fundaments of the conservative vision. More fundamental still were the material dominance of landed property and the spiritual reign of religion. Liberalism sought (and eventually attained) the dissolution of a conservative society and its culture. It advanced ideas of freedom of conscience and thought, of the rights of individuals, and attributed to politics the occasional function of transcending tradition. Again, tendencies more profound were at work: the enormously and continuously innovative effect of market capitalism—and the pervasive culture shock of science. To rehearse the classic antithesis of conservatism and liberalism is indeed a lesson in history: who now believes that discussion can be conducted in these terms?

THE usual argument about how advanced we are in the United States can be inverted. The Western Europeans are so advanced that their politics at least approaches relevance. There, the question is not whether capitalism should be modified, but how and by how much. Put in another way, we can say that Western European politics are so rooted in tradition that it is relatively easy for the Western Europeans to accept contemporaneity. Socialism, after all, has drawn upon large components of the conservative tradition—above all, the conviction that society consists of something else than an aggregation of autonomous individuals. The European Center, and even the Right, are something other than apologists for capitalism: their conservatism is not the conservatism of property—or not that exclusively. What is there in our own situation which makes political debate so constricted, and often so unreal?

With the beginnings of the American welfare state (at the beginning of our century, and not at its middle), the terms liberal and conservative

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came to characterize differing attitudes toward the regulation of the market. Liberals, in the interests of efficiency, equity, and freedom, were prepared to make inroads upon the sovereignty of the market. Conservatives (arguing that they were defending the same interests) were not. The development of capitalism—and, not least, the success of this version of liberalism—have rendered an absolute antithesis of polity and economy obsolete. The state and the market interpenetrate, economic power is politicized, and politics is often enough a struggle for shares of the gross national product. We could say that a peculiarly American liberalism has triumphed: everything, even culture, has been transformed into an aspect of a gigantic market. We could indeed say that, but we would be wrong: the insistence of a considerable number of persons on the American Left (such as it is) that in this simplification we already have an adequate description of our ills is no small obstacle to the development of an American socialism.

WHERE questions cannot be answered satisfactorily, it is advisable to try to pose new questions. I'll try to make a start. Our political discourse fails because it no longer refers to a reality which stubbornly refuses reduction to conventional terms. Russell Baker and Thomas Pynchon seem to be closer to reality than those of us who teach social science in the universities: why?

Economically, it makes no sense to speak of conservative and liberal positions. The conservative effort to depict our economy as free of politics is an absurdity: capitalism's most faithful servitors in the state expend large quanta of energy to maintain and extend the political conditions which favor profitability. Liberals, then, cannot be characterized by their penchant for intervention in the economy: what is at issue is what sort of intervention, for whom? At this point we come, rapidly, to questions of the nature of our political institutions.

Our government has been depicted as remote and unresponsive, but the trouble is that it is not nearly remote enough, and overly responsive. It serves ends other than those formed by an authentic and open communal process, and its influence is so pervasive that we cannot easily interrupt the sequences of domination which it perpetuates. Is the demand for more participation in decision, for more decentralization and community control, liberal or conservative? The question is fatuous. What is at issue is the content of political decision, and not simply its form or mechanism.

The troubles of the 60's have apparently subsided: talk of a social issue seems as out of date as the Agnew wristwatch. Appearances are deceptive: the social issue persists. Governor Carter's spiritual homilies, Governor Brown's appeals for restraint, Congressman Udall's candor, were no doubt personalized sorts of unprogrammatic discourse. They were (and remain) discourse—about the nature of our community, about the kinds of legitimacy politicians can and should claim, about the kinds of persons we are, or wish to become. Carter's singular combination of Southern populism, technocratic rationality, and evangelical morality amounts to an effort (as yet halting and uncertain) to place a social issue on our historical agenda. Twenty or more years ago, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., suggested that the time was almost ready for a qualitative, or cultural, politics. Paradoxically, this sort of politics is beginning to emerge in a period of economic depression and political disaffection—not because our system works so well that we have acquired large room for spiritual adventure, but because it works so badly that we may be obliged to deal with some forgotten but essential problems.

THIS seems a long way from learned disquisition on the past, or pathetic regret that we (unlike the more fortunate Europeans) lack a socialist alternative. Actually, the connection is close. The Europeans have gone beyond the debate between conservatism and liberalism because they are united in the conviction that politics is a matter of community and of culture. European liberalism vanquished European conservatism by absorbing much of value in it.

The current European debate on socialism is conducted in its own terms, not as an exercise in nostalgia. Our own philosophical sterility is a remnant of the belief that politics could be separated from the issues of community, culture, and the psyche. In that sense, liberalism has very nearly destroyed our chance at forging a new nationhood—and its so-called conservative opponents are its accomplices, parodying liberalism's defects by accentuating them. If we are fortunate, and honest, we will give the rest of this century (and the beginning of the next one) to a new American radicalism. Corporate capitalism in its present form won't survive it (and if we are still more fortunate, won't survive it at all). Before the frontal assault on capitalism can begin, however, we require a new politics of culture, new conceptions of community, new ideas about human limits. A new American radicalism will have to be based on a new view of politics. In the end, it may prove to be a rather old one: it wasn't an accident that the authors of the Federalist knew their Aristotle. They, at least, could distinguish political teleology from a tradeoff of interests. In the meantime, most of the current argument over conservatism and liberalism is a waste of everyone's time.

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Joseph W. Bishop, Jr.: No, I am not satisfied with the way the terms liberal and conservative are used today. I don't even know which I am myself, or which describes COMMENTARY. Neoconservative? Paleoliberal?

I *think* I have at least a vague idea of what a conservative is. He is a man (he doesn't feel the need to say "man or woman" or "person" when he means both sexes) who is slow to change institutions he doesn't like, until he has a pretty clear idea of what will take their place. He distrusts right-wing radicals more than most liberals distrust left-wing radicals. He has serious reservations about the natural wisdom and goodness of the mass of mankind. (But so do a lot of liberals.) He is likely to favor at least one kind of privilege —inherited or acquired wealth. (But so do all the liberals who happen to have it.) Examples are better than abstractions: Winston Churchill and H.L. Mencken, for all their originality and iconoclasm, were clearly and profoundly conservative. So, in some rather important ways, was George Orwell—language and literature, sexual mores, even the traditional beer, cookery (a word he always preferred to "cuisine"), and amusements of the English.

I cannot formulate even this unclear a definition of a liberal. Franklin Roosevelt, the tribal god of those who call themselves liberals, made a good try in 1941:

> One great difference that has characterized this division [between liberal and conservative parties] has been that the liberal party—no matter what its particular name was at the time—believes in the wisdom and efficacy of the will of the great majority of the people as distinguished from the judgment of a small minority. . . . The other great difference between the two parties has been this: The liberal party is a party which believes that, as new conditions and problems arise beyond the power of men and women to meet as individuals, it becomes the duty of the government itself to find new remedies with which to meet them. The liberal party insists that the government has the definite duty to use its power and resources to meet new social problems with new social controls—to insure to the average person the right to his own economic and political life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

This definition contained some internal contradiction even when it was written, but the second part is still pretty accurate, although many liberals are developing doubts about big government, at least when it is controlled by conservatives. But the first part? Those who favor abortion, busing, expanded sexual freedom, and racial and sex quotas in employment and education, and who oppose capital punishment, call themselves and are generally regarded as liberals. But they obviously have no faith whatever in the wisdom of the will of the great majority of the people, who are opposed to them. They are doing everything possible to have these problems resolved by a small minority in the courts and the bureaucracy. Ralph Nader, a liberal demigod, wants the Federal Aviation Agency to forbid smoking by flight crews, not only in the air but for eight hours before takeoff. He would probably impose total prohibition of both tobacco and alcohol if he could persuade five Justices of the Supreme Court to hold the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment unconstitutional.

Liberals have traditionally favored freedom of speech and the press, and by and large they still do, although some of them (like the management of the American Civil Liberties Union) are more concerned about the freedom of people with whose politics they agree. But so do conservatives, particularly since they began to feel themselves a minority. This leads to a negative definition: neither liberals nor conservatives are radicals, although some radicals try to disguise themselves. Nobody (with the real or spurious exception of some American Communists) regarded Stalin as a liberal, and nobody regarded Hitler as a conservative.

I do not think that Left and Right and similar labels are much more useful. In Europe, where such terms are in vogue, parties to the Right of Center frequently bear names like Social Democrats or Popular Socialists, or even Liberals. (The prize example was the Radical Socialist party of the Third French Republic, which was far from radical or socialist.) In any case, Left and Right are unlikely to replace the terms liberal and conservative in the United States, where no politician with any hope of being elected would allow himself to be tagged with either word.

The worst thing about the terms, particularly liberal, is that they sometimes amount to fraudulent mislabeling—and a good many citizens tend to vote by label. But with all their ambiguities, liberal and conservative will probably be with us for a long time, for they correspond to a real distinction, which most people instinctively feel, even when they cannot articulate it. It is a fact "That every boy and every gal/ That's born into the world alive/ Is either a little Liberal/ Or else a little Conservative"—although Gilbert might have added that few of them are really consistent about it.

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William F. Buckley, Jr.: One is never entirely satisfied, for reasons of vanity, with any label that presumes to describe one's own political philosophy. Some-

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how, one's own position, so delicately sculpted, so majestic in its implications, is . . . impoverished . . . by such labels as are appropriate to describe the positions of one's cruder associates. Having said this, I am reminded of the legendary Mexican intellectual delivering the routine denunciation of the Spanish, who *ruined* the indigenous culture, who exploited Mexico's wealth, savaged the population, contaminated Mexico with their superstitions, yoked the country to their policies. "Unhappily," the Mexican concludes, "it happens that I am myself *pure* Spanish." I am happy to call myself a conservative.

The term continues to have communicable meaning, notwithstanding the vagaries of political fashion. The extremes one can spot instantly. Thus the frequent references to "Kremlin conservatives," i.e., those who would revert to Stalinism. I wish I had clipped the wonderful dispatch in the New York *Times* several years ago in which the gray lady fell right into an ambush of her own making with the report that "conservatives" in the Kremlin were cracking down on the importation of books from abroad. Included in the recent list of forbidden books was *The Conscience of a Conservative* by Barry Goldwater. Routinely, the foreign "conservative" is the figure who favors the status quo just a *little* bit ante. Back before Stalin was the czar, nostalgia for whom would make one a reactionary. The "liberal" in any narrative involving foreigners is the beneficiary of the two dominant concerns of regnant American ideology: democracy and redistribution. How would the editorial writer of the New York *Times* handle a revolution in Peru aimed simultaneously at (a) restoring political democracy, and (b) restoring private property? With difficulty. Madame Gandhi is in disfavor. One can only imagine with what hostility she would have been met if, simultaneously, she had repealed democracy *and* socialism.

Even so, as we all know, the meaning of the words is in flux. Woodrow Wilson could write (in *Congressional Government*) that the history of liberalism is the history of man's efforts to restrain the growth of government. An incredibly short period later, surveying the tendency of the political thought of his colleagues, Santayana would say contemptuously that the only thing the modern liberal was concerned to liberate was man from his marriage contract. What one can see the traces of in recent years is, so to speak, a reactionary current in the use of both terms. If they do not remain dichotomous, their usefulness is over. For historical convenience, I date the countercurrent's beginning on the day when Daniel P. Moynihan, addressing the Americans for Democratic Action, said: Let's face it, conservatives know congenitally what we liberals required years of experience and intellection to know, namely, that there are limits to the uses of state power.

The general skepticism that followed the age of Lyndon Johnson gave impetus to this weighty reconsideration. The pretensions of the Great Society, like the ideals of the Allies in World War I, "grew grander with every restatement of them." Johnson was going to do something about the *quality* of our lives! Conservatives greeted that statement as rodomontade, pure and simple; liberals (one thinks of poor, disillusioned James Coleman) with childlike enthusiasm. What happened was such stuff as proscribed father-and-son dinners, inflation, chairpersons, busing, strikes by policemen, and the cosseting of mosquitoes. I like best Irving Kristol's summary of the convolutions. We live in an age, he has observed, when a girl can perform sexual intercourse onstage unmolested, provided she is being paid the minimum wage.

Distrust of social schematism grows. It is broadly manifested by those polls that reveal the great distrust of the people in government, a phenomenon which, to the intense disappointment of so many, survives Watergate. Almost twice as many Americans denominate themselves as conservative rather than liberal (even as they tend to vote Democratic rather than Republican). This does not add up to a formal renunciation of liberal heresies for reasons which, paradoxically, are conservative in nature. Conservatives *are* resistant to change. The widely unacknowledged orthodoxy in America is the docile acceptance of the Supreme Court as the supreme moral authority, which is why a nation as nearly unanimous as nations ever get on the subject of favoring prayer at school, and opposed to busing, cannot, for conservative reasons, launch a constitutional amendment to effect conservative reforms. These complexities are coils wound 'round the terms conservative and liberal, but they are not mortal. The terms continue to have a meaning which one can usually descry. And, if the compass needle gets wobbly, you can always magnetize it by pointing to Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., and Russell Kirk, for guaranteed repolarization.

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR., *is the editor of* National Review *and the author of, among other works,* Cruising Speed, Four Reforms, *and* Saving the Queen.

Robert Coles: Many of the working-class people I work with refuse to let themselves be called either liberal or conservative. They often use the qualifying phrase "it depends" when trying to explain where they stand on the political spectrum. For them a liberal can be a kind and generous person who worries about the poor, wants to see the rich and powerful put under more controls than they now experience, wants to see the average person better off—protected by laws, programs, and policies that reduce economic and political vulnerability. On the

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other hand, the word liberal has other connotations for many working people; they think of upper-middle-class, highly educated men and women who wear the creed of liberalism as if it were an import from a Parisian salon. The issue is not only one of style, but substance. Many factory workers don't want to surrender their cars to environmentalists, and even have the nerve to crave more possessions—aware, often, that those who give them lectures on their greed or wastefulness or selfishness or their "one-dimensional" consumerism (an "opiate" of sorts) are not infrequently in possession of a home or two, a car or two, and even a trust fund or a parent with one.

Liberals, for some workers—and especially in the South and West—have become identified as hypocrites, as smug and arrogant, as willing to sacrifice the opportunities and comforts of others, lower down on the social and economic ladder, in the interest of various ideological abstractions. If such judgments are sometimes grossly unfair caricatures, one still has to contend with their existence as an everyday fact of American political life. I can talk with a factory worker in, say, Greensboro, North Carolina—or for that matter, Lynn, Massachusetts—and find him in favor of national health insurance, a minimum family-income policy, broader unemployment benefits, or various federally supported work projects, but anxious not to be known as a liberal, because the word has, it seems, undesirable social and cultural connotations.

By the same token, conservatives have to struggle against the way they are seen by a lot of people—who may indeed want the United States second to none militarily, or who may oppose abortion-on-demand, or a gamut of attitudes and customs that get tucked into the word permissiveness, but who have memories of the Great Depression, of conservatives talking self-righteously, endlessly, and almost exclusively about "a balanced budget" while millions of American citizens were without work, hungry, and on the margin, arguably, of a revolutionary kind of despair. Though the word conservative also has for so-called ordinary or average people a suggestion of reliability, steadiness of purpose, a sensible caution in the face of shifting currents of opinion or behavior, there is with respect to the political use of that word a continuing pejorative implication: retrogressive social policy; greed and exploitation; the few, giving not an inch, in a fight for continued political and economic domination of the many. It is not only *New Yorker* cartoonists who, in connection wih political conservatism, think of bankers and corporation lawyers and businessmen sitting in their clubs and offices, fat and sassy and indifferent to the everyday struggles, and sometimes the desperate needs, of millions of people relatively nearby or far away.

My own day-to-day conversations with working people, of various social, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and in various parts of this country, have not really helped me understand how such contradictions or inconsistencies of attitude and opinion might be "resolved"—that cool, slippery word which social scientists and self-styled policy-makers use all too commonly these days when considering and trying to "modify" in their nervy way just about every aspect of man's human situation. "I don't know what the hell I'd call myself," a former white yeoman from Clayton, North Carolina told me a year ago. He has moved to the industrial, Piedmont section of the state, works in a non-union textile mill near Winston-Salem. He describes himself as "anti-union." (The company is, actually, quite generous to him and his co-workers—not least, maybe, because it is afraid of a successful union organizing effort.) He is still, at heart, a segregationist, though his language has changed over the years, and he has accommodated himself rather well to a number of changes in the form and substance of the South's race relations. His brother is a sergeant in the army, a career man, now stationed in Alabama. He and the brother are both Baptists, faithful churchgoers. Though a registered Democrat, he voted for Jesse Helms (now North Carolina's quite conservative Senator) and Richard Nixon in 1972. He doesn't like "the civil-rights people," or "the noisy college students who are always stirring up trouble, here and all over the country." He loves America. He is, by his own definition, a conservative—which means, to him, "being loyal to your own beliefs, which you learned from your parents and your minister, and which you want to hand down to your children."

Challenge those beliefs—or dismiss them with condescension or worse as empty pieties—and he will rally round with energetic determination, anxious to defend what he believes to be his independence, his loyal and affectionate citizenship, his religious faith, his moral principles. Yet when one suggests (after listening to him, in another mood, at another time, complain about his lot, worry over his children's prospects) that there are important political and economic changes that might be made in North Carolina, in the South, in the United States of America, in the world, he nods quietly. He will even, upon occasion, assert enthusiastically the stuff of American populism. ("Why shouldn't the workers, like myself, get a better deal? Why shouldn't *we* own some of these factories—instead of those stockholders, who never come near this place, and soak up all the profits that we make, sweating and sweating, the long hours of sweating?")

Like many other Americans (millions of them, I believe) he is *both* liberal and conservative. And one suspects that the successful American political leader (successful in getting elected and pushing through a particular program) is the one who knows how to appraise those honorable as well

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as self-serving confusions, those decent as well as corrupt ambiguities, pay them all heed, work around them and through them—rather than treat them with moral outrage, with the logician's horror, the intellectual's impatience or disdain.

ROBERT COLES *is a research psychiatrist at the Harvard University Health Services and the author of* Children of Crisis *(3 volumes),* Farewell to the South, The Mind's Fate, *and other works.*

Midge Decter: When one thinks of the policies that have within the past decade come to be prominently identified with people calling themselves liberals, there is a powerful temptation simply to relinquish the designation to them and set about looking for a new name for oneself. The mention of only three of these policies—there are others—should suffice to illustrate what I mean. I shall identify them with the euphemisms that have made it possible for their proponents to disguise the fact that they are reactionary rather than progressive policies and thus cleanse them for their elevation into liberal dogma: community control, affirmative action, and setting limits to growth. With regard to community control, the conversion of one of the glories of liberal thought—namely, the idea of protecting the minority from the oppression of the majority—into the demand for small and local, and therefore absolutely majoritarian, units of power leaves one with the feeling that there is no longer, and perhaps can no longer be, any continuity in our political language. As for the other two policies cited above, merely translating their current names into somewhat plainer English—"preferential quotas" for "affirmative action" and "too great a spread of the wealth is despoiling the earth" for "limits to growth"—should be enough to remind us what these new liberals would have been called only twenty short years ago.

Moreover, if there are compelling political reasons for giving up the name of liberal, the cultural reasons for doing so are even more compelling. After all, American liberals have not for at least half a century been credited with either a rich sense of life, a valuable perception of human experience, a proper understanding of history, or a large and genuine capacity either to respond to or to produce great art. The most important lessons imparted to my generation from our most important liberal teachers, Lionel Trilling and Reinhold Niebuhr, consisted precisely in a whole series of assaults upon the priggish, conceited, and manipulative idolatries of modern-day liberalism.

So why not simply make honest people of ourselves and let "liberal" mean reactionary and "conservative" mean liberal and "reactionary" mean conservative, as they do now anyway in our major newspapers and on our television networks? Why not submit to that pressing invitation to play the game of semantic musical chairs in which everybody simultaneously moves over to another designation?

Unfortunately the problem of how we ought to use these terms is not so simple, as COMMENTARY's invitation to join in this symposium in itself bears witness. The argument about who is a liberal cannot be settled by the sort of flexing of verbal muscles that settled so many of our arguments when we were innocent undergraduates. For the word liberal, alas, is the only word we have which keeps us vitally connected with the revolution—I will say, the one true revolution—that brought us to our present fortunate condition. One may call oneself something else for purposes of handy identification—in, say, the issuance of public statements (in such cases nowadays I for instance call myself a centrist)—but that is for the sake of efficiency and immediate recognition only. The question is, what does one call oneself *to* oneself? And my answer is that for people like me to relinquish "liberal," as we have been pressed to do by everyone from Lester Maddox to the *Village Voice*, for us to hand the term over without a fight to the enemies and would-be usurpers of our revolution, is to risk not only acquiescing in the betrayal of that revolution but losing the sense of who we really are as well. That in my opinion is why Trilling and Niebuhr, arch-critics of so much that liberalism had wrought, continued to call themselves liberals; and what they found it necessary to do, I discover, presents itself to me as a legacy of unremitting obligation.

How one is driven, in a time of the corruption of words, to state the obvious! The revolution I am referring to—liberalism's revolution—is the one that grew, however imperfectly and unprettily, out of the idea that each person is, and is entitled to be treated as, an irreducible individual. For all its appearance of being a banal piety, that idea is still so new and startling to mankind that even in the United States people cannot seem to keep their minds on it for more than a few years at a time. What it means is that no person may be forcibly imprisoned within the class or clan or even family into which he was born. Compared with this revolution, all other revolutions seem, and are, mere rearrangements of power—usually the power of one class or group to oppress another.

I would bet that there are not six participants in this symposium who do not, as I do, owe the comfort of their lives, the cultivation of their minds, the softness of their hands—or to state the proposition with an extremism not entirely in-

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appropriate to this century, who do not owe the fact that they are not buried in a pauper's grave or even are not literally gone up in smoke—to the idea that their grandfathers or their fathers or they themselves were not to be confined to their station at birth. Whatever other product of liberalism I may deplore, I must not forget that this idea is one to which I owe my very existence.

How, then, can I settle—as I sometimes long, for the sake of peace and quiet, to do—for the title of conservative? True, these days there are many more things I wish to conserve than to improve upon, and my skepticism about the possibility of doing the latter has been well fed of late. But all of that pales in the light of my recognition that had conservatism been dominant among my precursors, they would have ruled *me* out. In other words, I have no choice but to be a liberal. Consequently there is no way I can be relieved of my obligation to do battle with those who are seeking to undo my revolution and abscond with its good name.

MIDGE DECTER, *a senior editor at Basic Books, is the author of* The Liberated Woman and Other Americans, The New Chastity, *and* Liberal Parents, Radical Children.

Edith Efron: Such terms as liberal and conservative are invaluable to political analysis because they represent both competitive and self-contradictory theories of the individual's relationship to the state. Without these polar abstractions, it is impossible to grasp what has happened in this country in the past forty years, or to estimate the state of our liberty, or the reasons for our mysterious philosophical bankruptcy.

Conservative theory is intent on balancing two contradictory values: social continuity and individual liberty. In the domain of social continuity, the conservative is not a defender of liberty. He seeks to shelter traditional institutions and moral values, and views individual or social rebellion against them as a threat to the social fabric. In this realm, the conservative is not averse to invoking state coercion. Where he takes his primary stand on liberty is in the economic realm, and here he seeks to shelter the individual from that same state coercion. Classical conservative theory holds that the individual can only be free from state tyranny if his productive existence is free, if his enterprises are privately owned, if his exchange of goods and services is voluntary, and if he has the right to keep the honestly earned fruits of his labors. That is the political meaning of free enterprise or capitalist theory. Whether the conservative advocates laissez-faire or views some government intervention as necessary, he reflects the Lockean view that life, liberty, and property are man's basic rights.

Liberalism, in its modern form, has been the mirror opposite of conservatism. It, too, has sought to balance two contradictory values—liberty and equality. The liberal's primary stand on liberty is in the intellectual, moral, and value realms. There he, too, defines individual liberty as freedom from the coercive state; and increasingly he advocates laissez-faire in the domain of values. When it comes to equality, however, the liberal abandons his concern for liberty, and advocates state coercion in the economic realm. Today, he does not merely seek a generous equality of opportunity which honors the differences in individual ability—he seeks an arbitrary equality of economic results in defiance of those individual differences. This goal requires massive and incessant use of state force to confiscate and (allegedly) to redistribute the private property of those who have produced it to those who have failed to do so.

Contemporary political life can roughly be described as a result of forty years of tossing these two competing and self-contradictory positions in a mix-master. America is now a political entity best described as a corporate welfare state. Inevitably in such a state, the speed of cultural and political degeneration is visible to the naked eye. Because liberalism has dominated the bulk of the nation's intelligentsia for almost half a century, and because its positions are incessantly articulated by the academy and the media, the failure of the liberal component of the state is most apparent.

LIBERALISM has not achieved its egalitarian goals. It has not eradicated racism, any more than it has eradicated anti-Semitism. Nor has it created economic equality, within or between the races. Nor has it abolished poverty. Instead, it has created a permanent and proliferating class of economic dependents, both white and non-white. It has been condescending to blacks, in whose "interest" it has sought to degrade educational and professional standards and the principle of merit. It has turned an entire generation into regressive collectivists who classify human beings by color, gender, and sexual practices, in a manner appropriate to zoos, not to civilized society. It has created a Kafkaesque bureaucracy which consumes most of the federal budget, and which perceives all productive Americans as fodder for its increasingly indefinable goals. It has ceaselessly attacked security and military agencies for draining off money that "should" be funneled into this bottomless bureaucratic hole. Finally, it has launched a war against capitalism and private property; it has steadily eroded the freedom of the middle classes; and it is now seeking blindly to paralyze industry and to stop its growth.

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What is far less apparent is the nature of the power that has been sustaining this unrealistic and destructive philosophy. That power comes from the corporate world—i.e., from "conservatives." The quotation marks are necessary because these "conservatives" are neither the coercive moralists nor the economic anti-statists of the traditional conservative world. They are a mutation that has occurred after years of liberal dominance of the culture—"conservatives" who have accepted the liberal economic philosophy as the unalterable status quo, and who, in effect, have become domesticated statists. The American corporation, today, is the embodiment of this hybridization. It is characterized by a fundamental contradiction—the compulsion to be respectable in liberal eyes, and the compulsion to preserve its enterprises from liberal destruction. It has accepted the interventionist doctrines of the coercive-egalitarian state, and seeks to manipulate them in self-defense. And it absorbs attack by coopting the philosophy of its attackers. No group in America sounds more earnestly dedicated to successive causes of the liberal intelligentsia—and no group voluntarily supplies liberal universities and liberal media with more money—than the respectable statists of top corporate management. When under severe attack, the corporate world abruptly reverts to the historic language of free enterprise, which deludes many into believing that the textbook ideological battle still exists. It doesn't. Economic conservatism is anathema to contemporary big business, if not to the smaller, independently owned companies. Authentic free enterprise, an authentically free market, would imperil the giant corporation which is strongly sheltered by the state from the full impact of freedom, so long as it submits to liberal bureaucratic rule. On that tacit deal does liberal philosophy and our corporate welfare state rest.

How then are we to assess the state of our liberty? It has been severely eroded to the point that danger is already sensed by the non-philosophical electorate. For three presidential campaigns in a row, American voters have been increasingly antagonistic to both the corporate and the welfare aspects of the state, and have been repudiating big business, big government, and liberals. Statist liberals themselves have discovered that the rights of dissenters of their own political coloration have been violated, not only by those administrations they have detested, but by the administrations they have most honored. And anti-statist conservatives have discovered that they are being historically annihilated, not only by the statist liberals who are their proclaimed foes, but by the very state-supported capitalists they still defend on principle. Trussed together by the decades of self- and mutual betrayals that have created the corporate welfare state, the conservative and liberal have acquired a permanent vision of politics as conspiracy, a permanent case of paranoia. Each is convinced that a mindless force is devouring his liberty. And both are right.

There is a magnificent logic, both political and poetic, in the two strongly philosophical radical movements that are now emerging from the anti-intellectual debris of the 60's. On the Left, we see a Communist-totalitarian revival which, with immaculate consistency, *repudiates* both the liberal's spiritual and the conservative's material theories of liberty. On the Right, we see a libertarian movement which, with immaculate consistency, *integrates* both the liberal's spiritual and the conservative's material theories of liberty. In an increasingly stagnant world of pragmatic grays, the blackest of blacks and the whitest of whites have defiantly appeared. Their greatest significance is that they are taking direct aim at the self-contradictory value systems of traditional liberalism and traditional conservatism—the contradictions which in the last analysis are responsible for the bankruptcy of both.

EDITH EFRON, *a journalist, freelance writer, and critic of the media, is the author of* The News Twisters.

Edward Jay Epstein: Recently, at a leisurely poolside buffet in East Hampton, I posed the question, "Who is a liberal and who is a conservative these days?" Six people—three journalists and three businessmen—attempted to define and differentiate these political categories. While each articulated what he considered to be the cutting edge of modern liberalism (or conservatism), each gave an entirely different definition. The definitions ranged from time horizons (liberals are future-oriented, conservatives past-oriented) to dichotomies of hardness/softness (dove/hawk). While those polled could not agree on any one definition of liberal/conservative, all were positive that they could distinguish between the liberal or conservative position. This is not unreasonable: individuals might disagree on what constitutes a beautiful day (sunlight, temperature, air quality), but all the same agree that a given day is beautiful. The labels of liberal and conservative may thus serve a useful purpose in political discourse even though not systematically definable.

IF one limited the search for liberals and conservatives to applied politics (as opposed to philosophical spectrums of opinion), it would be far easier to isolate defining criteria. For example, if one assumed that liberals tended to support actions whose primary purpose was to redistribute income from the rich to the less rich, and conversely conservatives tended to oppose such measures,

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I think most, though not all, liberals and conservatives in Congress and state legislatures could be accurately identified. The main example would of course be transfer payments such as increased unemployment and welfare benefits. (Busing could also be viewed as a redistributive measure—though many liberals may now doubt the value of it.) Even when liberals and conservatives vote for the same measure—for example, a defense appropriation—they could be differentiated by this criterion, since presumably the liberals would justify their vote primarily on redistributive grounds (transferring jobs to their state) while conservatives would justify their votes on military grounds.

Such a criterion could not be aplied to essentially moral issues (Watergate) or to foreign-policy issues (Vietnam). Moreover, the liberal/conservative categories can create confusion when applied to foreign situations (for example, the attempt to explain tribal wars in Africa in terms of competing liberals and conservatives). But if the usage of the liberal/conservative distinction can be limited to the more mundane domestic issues of distribution (who gets what, etc.), the labels have some value in locating and anchoring the various political players, if only in relation to one another.

EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN *is research director of the Twentieth Century Fund's Project on News Agencies. Mr. Epstein's books include* Inquest, News from Nowhere, *and* Between Fact and Fiction: The Problem of Journalism.

Joseph Epstein: As someone who counts himself a liberal, I cannot say that I am very well satisfied with the way the term liberal is now used. The term has, I think, lost its central meaning and in doing so has picked up a number of unpleasant associations along the way. People who do not count themselves liberals tend to agree on viewing the liberal as a political naïf, wrong-minded, woolly-headed, an encumbrance to sound political sense, a good-hearted fool, with the accent falling resoundingly on the last word. How did this come to be?

In American political life liberal has in recent years come to be a middle term between radical and conservative. By middle term I do not mean to imply anything so grand as that liberalism represents the golden mean in contemporary politics. I mean rather that in what has become our principal political issue, that of liberty *vs.* equality, the liberal has not finally come down on one or the other side. Radicals and conservatives have chosen sides: the radical holding that there can be no liberty without equality, the conservative holding that liberty is paramount. Because the liberal's position on the liberty-*vs.*-equality issue is indeterminate, his politics have tended to be ameliorative. And this may be why he is despised by both sides.

Why is it one never hears talk of conservative or radical guilt, yet the phrase liberal guilt has become a staple of American political language? Liberal guilt can be traced, I believe, back to the liberal's indeterminate stand on the issue of liberty and equality. Take nearly any important question of our day and there you will find the liberal spread-eagled by his indecision over choosing between the different (and, as often as not, contradictory) objectives of liberty and equality. Affirmative action is a useful example. On the one hand, the liberal feels amends ought to be made to those unjustly treated in the past. On the other hand, he knows the vile uses to which quotas have historically been put, and he does not wish to discourage merit, the liberty owed to true excellence. To do little if not nothing, as the conservative suggests, is to let old injustices persist. To do a great deal if not everything, as the radical suggests, is to stand by and see many people penalized, exchanging, into the bargain, old injustices for new. So it goes. With his habitual on-the-one-hand-and-on-the-other-hand mode of thinking, the liberal, confronted with questions where liberty and equality contend, finds his own hands tied. Small wonder the liberal is despised. Small wonder he soon begins to despise himself.

Yet one thing the liberal can do is to be aware of the tradition out of which his uncomfortable position derives. As a liberal, I find that tradition most generously represented in the lives and works of three men, none of them, for whatever it is worth, an American: Alexander Herzen, John Stuart Mill, and George Orwell. All three men hungered for liberty and equality, and each in his own time was despised by people to the Right and to the Left of him. No one of the three failed to believe in evil—a charge commonly leveled against liberals—but instead each formed his most important ideas directly out of his heightened awareness of the evil abounding in the world. While they hated injustice, they hated along with it the element of coercion in political life. Writing about John Stuart Mill, Isaiah Berlin has remarked that this last quality "is the ultimate basis of political liberalism."

Such, in theory, is the liberal tradition. In practice, the story in recent years has been very different, and over the past decade or so in the United States rather shameful. Liberals have during these years tended not to have the courage of their lack of convictions. Their stand as a group during the tumult of the latter part of the 60's was, to put it gently, less than heroic. On the national political scene no liberal figure of any substance has arisen, if one excludes—as I, for one, find myself with no hesitation able to do—the dim figures

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of Frank Church and Morris Udall. Liberalism at the moment seems in general rout. Nowadays it is uncertain how many people in America would even own up to calling themselves liberal.

One of the ironies of the present situation is that one group that has all along insisted on calling itself liberal, the writers gathered around COMMENTARY and the *Public Interest*, nearly everyone else insists on calling conservative. If nothing else, the spectacle of a group of intellectuals insisting on its liberalism while others insist on this same group's conservatism makes plain how muddied the semantic waters swirling around the terms liberal and conservative have become. It might be interesting to inquire why this group disdains the label conservative as a description of its position. I would guess that they disdain the label because in part they genuinely believe themselves still committed to the liberal position, and in part because they wish to free themselves of the associated meanings that the term conservatism has acquired over the years in the United States. Among these meanings, rightly or wrongly, are "self-serving" and "resistant to social change." Implicit in this group's disdain for the label conservative is the assumption that it does matter how these terms are used, and I think they are correct in making this assumption. It matters a great deal.

It matters because, whatever theoretical clarity one might bring to such terms, in practice the terms themselves are often used as a form of political name-calling. On more than one occasion in print I have discovered myself described as a liberal writer—and not by people who agree with my views. On other occasions I have discovered myself described as a conservative writer—again by people who do not find my views congenial. The point is that both terms were used in derogation, which is perhaps the chief usage under which each now suffers, as the term radical suffers under the burden of the idiotic behavior carried out behind its banner over the course of the past decade. It is as terms of abuse that liberal, radical, and conservative nowadays seem to enjoy their greatest currency.

Despite this, I think these terms, when carefully employed, can still serve the useful purpose of clarifying political discourse. I believe they are most usefully employed in identifying positions on the issue of liberty *vs.* equality. For all their ambiguity and potential abuse, I should not like to see the terms radical and conservative changed to, say, equalitarian and libertarian, because among other things it would leave liberals out of the discussion and allow the adherents of these various political positions less than the complexity which their beliefs deserve.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN *is the editor of the* American Scholar.

James Finn: Only a fool or a deliberate obfuscator inspired by the Father of All Lies could be satisfied with the way the terms liberal and conservative are used today. Because the situation is so messy, it's difficult to know what point of entry to make into the swampland of public political discourse. I will attempt two, one leading to our domestic situation, the second to international affairs.

1. The term liberal has philosophical roots that have nourished unevenly the programmatic liberalism of this country. (That they have also fed programmatic conservatism is part of our semantic problem.) Historically, liberalism has stressed the value of the individual, a reliance upon reason, and a belief in the inherent goodness of mankind. The positive aspects of this cluster of concepts provided short-range goals and suggested political directions for American liberals for many years. But even these positive aspects can be diluted and perverted. And so they were during the last decades. When this happened, the necessary intellectual and political task was to show where and how U.S. policies and programs diverged from what liberal politics at its best would dictate.

Instead something else took place. That liberal platform on which for decades were crowded intellectuals, columnists, and writers, all of whom would have accepted if they did not actually claim the label of liberal—that platform was suddenly deserted. Where once stood a lively, energetic group, there were a few lonely figures and a mess of stinking garbage. Some of the garbage was heaved there by former liberals who, without changing their basic orientation, moved over to programmatic conservatism.

Most of the garbage was heaved there, however, by liberals who, putting on radical-face, adopted the worst excesses and weaknesses that liberalism is heir to. They put aside ideas of compromise, civility, and diffidence that are properly liberal. They disclaimed responsibility for leaders and policies they had supported. Instead, they gave lectures: we've had enough of the lesser of two evils, look where it's gotten us. We need statesmen, not politicians. This is no longer a question of politics, it's a matter of morality. We must punish and purify the party that dares to offer us Hubert Humphrey. Blacks continue to live at the bottom of the ladder because liberals lack guts. Bourgeois freedoms are only formal freedoms.

I kept a file of such lectures in the late 60's and early 70's, but when it threatened to overflow the room I threw it away. I perceived gradually and reluctantly that these lectures—delivered by some of our "best" and most liberal writers and columnists—had done their work. They had transformed the term liberal—long an honorific ascription—into a smear term. There is no single writer with the intellectual authority to restore the term to its former value. That restoration, when it comes, will

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probably be the work of a President who knows how to appeal to liberals. They are still out there.

2. The terms liberal and conservative, Right and Left, play against each other in our political discussion. The intellectual evisceration of one term affects, therefore, its polar term. This is happening in our discussion of foreign affairs.

The traditional tasks assigned to the nation-state have been to protect its populace from external attack and to provide for their well-being. Traditionally, too, conservatives in this country have stressed the first and liberals the second of these two essential tasks. This difference led, for example, to different judgments of what to cut at home *if* we were not to have both guns and butter. It also led to different emphases on how we could most effectively influence both foes and allies with the military and economic means at our disposal.

WITH that observation in mind, I want to comment on how the nation-state system in which the U.S. is a preeminent actor has changed in the last several decades. Before 1945 the nation-state was seen as an independent unit whose place in the system was a function of its political influence and military power. Within the state, domestic policies were regarded as being of a different order and distinct from its foreign policies. Neither of these statements is adequate to present reality. Political power must now vie with economic power in determining political weight and influence. And domestic and foreign policies now affect each other much more than they did in the past.

To the degree that nuclear weapons have stripped from every country claims of security, the nation-state is an anachronism. It is, nevertheless, the anachronism with which we must now work, and strategic questions are unavoidable and significant. But while this technological-military power has lost some of its political utility, economic power has increased in political utility. Rather than arguing over the relative political weights to be given to military and to economic power, it is probably better to talk in terms of political-strategic and political-economic issues, both of which must be heavily weighted.

Anyone who sees the nation-state system developing in this direction will probably respond to particular political situations in ways that cannot easily be categorized as traditionally liberal or conservative. (I put aside those people whose automatic response is to burden the U.S. with more weapons for more interventions and those whose automatic response is to burden the U.S. with guilt because "their poverty is the result of our wealth.") There will continue to be questions about the relative military strength of the USSR and the U.S., about the political merits of modern China, about the proper relation of the industrial democracies to the poorer countries of the globe, about the dangers of "Eurocommunism." They will not be adequately answered by those who have shaped our policies over the last two decades, some of whom retain their positions, nor by those critics who see the U.S. as the greatest single purveyor of the world's present ills. Nor will they be answered adequately or consistently by those whose attention swings from one "crisis" to another "crisis," sweetly, piously unaware that the almost unparalleled depth of our present disorder—of which the various crises are significant manifestations—lies in the increasing cultural uncertainty about the nature of man, his destiny, and the meaning of history. To these basically religious questions only basically religious responses are adequate, and, in our present society, even the questions are surrounded by confusion.

But to return to the more usual and programmatic uses of the terms conservative and liberal—I think there has not yet emerged a conservative position or a liberal position that could not be absorbed, assimilated (and partially discounted) by a new, energetic, and determined administration. In spite of the supposed overlap in the views of Henry Kissinger and Jimmy Carter, these questions are likely to look very different four years from now. And so will the terms of political discourse.

JAMES FINN *is the editor of* Worldview.

Charles Frankel: I think the words Left and Right have had a baleful effect on the politics of every country. They have rooted into the popular (and intellectual) consciousness the melodramatic notion that every social issue really has only two sides. They give endorsement to what is at bottom a piece of astrology—the belief that all historical changes are changes along a single line of development, and one is either in favor of this line of development or opposed to it. And they draw the basic political division around the issues of equality and fraternity and imply that other issues—liberty, abundance, amenity, the stimulation of intelligence and energy, the protection of intimacy and privacy, the promotion of the arts and sciences and of what the Greeks called the virtues—are of secondary importance. I don't think that equality and fraternity are minor purposes, but neither do I believe that a civilized political system can squeeze every issue into these containers.

Moreover, to the extent that Left and Right become identical with liberal and conservative, they destroy the meaning and utility of these terms. People sympathetic with "progressive" or leftist tyrannies then call themselves liberals. People who think that the protection of free government is still a major requirement of foreign policy are called conservatives. On the whole, I am pre-

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pared to accept a certain vagueness in the use of the words liberal and conservative in practical politics. If coalition and compromise are desirable, they serve their function better by retaining a certain elasticity. But when they become associated with the quasi-theological words Left and Right even their vagueness loses its practical merits.

Nor can I be content with the vagueness of liberal and conservative in intellectual discussion. They are words that have meanings deriving from a complex history. Unhappily, writers seldom indicate which meaning of liberal and conservative they have in mind when they use the terms, and the result is to multiply confusion and paradox. Let me try to indicate what I think are some, though not all, of the principal meanings of these terms.

1. Liberal stands for a certain recurrent kind of temperament and style of mind, illustrated by figures like Socrates, Thomas Aquinas, Spinoza, or John Stuart Mill. It is inclined to criticize and restate an inherited moral tradition in relatively secular terms, and to try to fit new perspectives into that tradition. The examination of first principles seems to it a necessary way of keeping a changing society on course. However, in practical affairs it distrusts polarities and sweeping formulas, prefers compromise and accommodation, and moves to occupy the middle ground between contending factions.

Conservative, in this context, stands for an attitude inclined to place less trust in the processes of rational self-criticism and more faith in the unconscious wisdom of communal loyalties and piety to the past. The difference is one of degree. There are liberals with a conservative bent, and conservatives who are simply more cautious liberals.

2. Liberal designates a major secular political tradition of the West—broadly, the values adumbrated in Pericles' Funeral Oration. Some conservatism—e.g., Burke's—fits largely within the liberal tradition in this sense. However, there are conservative philosophies—e.g., de Maistre's or Dostoevsky's—which are fundamentally anti-liberal.

3. Liberal describes the philosophy and social institutions that reached their apogee in the 19th century—civil liberty, open political competition based on the concept of a loyal opposition, and the establishment and protection of a large independent private sector in economic affairs, religion, education, and the professions. Behind the movement that led to these institutions there was a general attitude of receptivity to science and empirical inquiry, to economic growth, and to technological innovation. And with this attitude went the belief that social reform was a constant necessity as a way of adjusting society to innovations.

In the course of the 19th century, under the influence of democratic and egalitarian currents, liberalism absorbed the further idea that in addition to equal rights there should also be a greater diffusion of power and more social equality. But its basic instrument for achieving these goals remained equality of opportunity—a society open to the talents.

Conservative, in this context, has meant less acceptance of "progress" and more concern with "order"; more fear of individualism, materialism, and liberal irreverence; more trust in inherited hierarchies; more skepticism about the power of human reason to deal with the problems which its unhampered exercise creates.

4. A narrower but probably the most ordinary contemporary meaning of liberal derives from the movement of intellectual revision and social reform which began in the late 19th century and was designed to adjust liberal institutions and values to the new corporate and collective context of economic and political action. There were divergent strands in this movement—hence some of the confusions about the meaning of liberal today. Some liberals stressed decentralization, trust-busting, a return to smallness; others a more powerful state, larger labor unions, an array of protective welfare measures. The New Deal was an amalgam of these two approaches, but came more and more to emphasize the latter. The war and the Depression probably had more to do with this than ideology.

Conservative, in contrast to liberal as so defined, has generally meant a greater faith in the capacity of a self-regulating market system to meet its problems without liberal tinkering.

5. Finally, there is a curious meaning of liberal. Liberalism, which came to maturity in a period of unusual economic and intellectual achievement, has been generally optimistic about the possibility of improvement in the human condition. But this optimism—Voltaire's, Mill's—was surely a chastened one, except when it has been overlaid with the romanticist and historicist belief in a great Idea moving through history and carrying humanity forward to an earthly City of God. This secularized idea of Providence sits badly with the empirical and pragmatic tradition in liberalism, and it explains, I think, why liberals repeatedly break apart into contending groups.

Where do conservatives stand in regard to this romanticized liberalism? Some have their own romanticist view of history: they simply see it as a steady movement away from the One True Idea, rather than toward it. Other conservatives find themselves fundamentally at one with the empirical, unevangelical liberals in their anti-utopianism.

IN SUM, liberal has a shifting content so far as its narrower meanings are concerned. These refer to instrumentalities used in particular historical settings for the purpose of preserving or extending the values and style of liberalism in its larger and more enduring meanings. Bewilderment about the meaning of liberal is basically the result of

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two kinds of misuse of the term: first, the identification of it simply with ideas and institutions developed a generation ago to deal with problems different from those we face today; second, the identification of it automatically with what is new, "progressive," and perceived as the wave of the future.

As for conservative—in our culture it takes its meanings primarily by contrast with liberal. So if liberal is used uncritically, conservative will be a perplexing word, too.

CHARLES FRANKEL *is Old Dominion Professor of Philosophy and Public Affairs at Columbia University. Mr. Frankel's works include* The Case for Modern Man *and* The Democratic Prospect.

Max Frankel: You ask about the use of liberal and conservative in contemporary political discourse. As of midmorning of Independence Day 1976, I understand the terminology as follows:

It is liberal to wish to conserve our resources and conservative to wish to spend them liberally.

It is liberal to cause unemployment by arresting economic growth. It is conservative to create employment with hellbent economic growth.

It is liberal to prefer the risk of Arab oil boycotts to the risks of nuclear power plants. It is conservative to risk only riskless capital for any kind of energy anywhere.

It is liberal to tolerate monopolistic prices for foreign oil and conservative to tolerate monopolistic prices for domestic oil.

It is liberal to expect corporations to behave like the government. It is conservative to expect the government to behave like corporations.

It is liberal to risk high-priced failure and costly overruns in almost every federal department, except the Pentagon. It is conservative to risk them only in the Pentagon.

It is liberal to subsidize buildings in which people live and conservative to subsidize buildings in which people work.

It is liberal to oppose international boycotts on grounds of principle, except against Rhodesia. It is conservative to oppose international boycotts as ineffective, except against Cuba.

It is liberal to try to use trade to temper the behavior of the government of Chile. It is conservative to try to use trade to temper the behavior of the government of the Soviet Union.

It is liberal to perceive humanism among the Communists of Italy. It is conservative to perceive humanism among the fascists of Chile.

It is liberal to think that the United Nations has become an alien and anti-democratic force hostile to United States interests. It is conservative to think, "I told you so," or to say so aloud.

It is liberal to demand that Israel contemplate coexistence with a Palestinian state. It is conservative to demand that any Arab state contemplate coexistence with Israel.

It is liberal to inhibit the power of the Presidency and conservative to wish to preserve it (that is, while conservatives occupy the office).

It is liberal to favor food stamps in New York. It is conservative to favor food stamps in Des Moines.

It is liberal to favor government subsidy for the Metropolitan Opera. It is conservative to favor government subsidy for the New York Mets.

It is liberal to segregate schoolchildren by religion, or social class, and conservative to segregate them by race.

It is liberal to regard crime as the inevitable consequence of economic deprivation. It is conservative to regard deprivation as the inevitable consequence of economic progress.

It is liberal to wish to expunge most criminal records, except for those seeking to buy a pistol. It is conservative to keep such records public, except for those seeking to buy a pistol.

It is liberal to believe that inequality results primarily from inequity. It is conservative to believe that inequity results primarily from inequality.

By and large, it is middle-aged to find anything peculiar or paradoxical in these formulations, and it is youthful to find them unremarkable. So while the key words may have lost most of their value and no longer define coherent political philosophy, they still serve, like neckties, as useful symbols of pretense or identification among the fashion-conscious majority of us.

FOR a time, I also thought the words would attain a counter-cyclical value in our politics. Thus, when Nixon embraced détente or welfare reform while insisting that he remained a conservative, it seemed only a matter of time before those who insisted on remaining liberals would oppose those policies. This transvestitism has not worked as neatly as I had hoped, but there has been enough of it to keep two sexes in the political game, which is the most important consideration for politicians and analysts of the species. They possess an overriding need to know not what we are for but rather whom we are against.

I guess I deplore the confusion that prompted your inquiry. But I have lived with it since a wise theorist once challenged me to explain American political divisions down to the grass roots with an essay that might be entitled, "Democratic and Republican Ways to Collect the Garbage." Now that we are done with Marx, I'm sure, and almost finished with Freud, I hope, what can be the harm of debasing our political definitions à la Einstein?

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It is liberal, in Wall Street, to work for the New York *Times*, and conservative in Greenwich Village.

MAX FRANKEL *is associate editor of the New York* Times *and will soon become editor of its editorial page.*

Eugene D. Genovese: The terms liberal and conservative have always been ambiguous and, in America at least, defy close definition. For reasons historically discernible but nonetheless tiresome, our present categories date from the New Deal era. Thus, convention has liberals in favor of everything classical liberalism rose to power fighting against: big government, bureaucratic centralization, vigorous state intervention in the economy, and vast welfare schemes. The conservatives, poor souls, have been thrust into no-saying: to their detractors they are people who are against it, whatever it is. Finally, the absurd campaign of 1972 gave us radicals—a category seemingly referring to liberals who suffer from an excess of bad manners or from a craving to return to Washington as resident intellectuals, presumably so that they might reverse those terrible policies (the Truman Doctrine, the Bay of Pigs, the missile crisis, the war in Vietnam) which they invented in the first place. True, the McGovern campaign also attracted those genuinely on the Left and those who sought to realize long-standing commitments to peace and racial justice, but the hope for a new movement that such people represent will have to be discussed at another time and in another place.

With meaningless, or rather demagogic, political divisions like these, no wonder the American people continue to vote for liberals while increasingly identifying themselves as conservatives. Apparently, it is their sanity they wish to conserve. Not a bad instinct—especially since virtually all politicians today insist on placing themselves in the moderate wing of whatever party they belong to.

The practical issue remains. There is an identifiable conservative movement in America and even an identifiable radical movement, although in disarray. To speak of a liberal movement makes little sense since liberalism defines most of the political spectrum as a way of pretending to do without a specific ideology and of agreeing on the efficacy of *ad hoc* solutions to problems. Thus, *National Review* does indeed stand for something, and impressively so. Traditionalists (those who yearn for an organic society based on property and status) coexist, however uneasily, with advocates of the free market. The miracle is that they manage to do so with a minimum of fudging and with a high degree of coherence. The basis of their unity has been hard-line anti-Communism, opposition to much of the welfare state, and a common sensibility—shared by many socialists—that finds offensive American liberalism's cynical indifference to family, religion, and traditional moral standards.

WITH due respect to the achievement of the brilliant coterie who have made *National Review* the most consistently interesting political journal in the country and to such astute conservative politicians as Senator James Buckley, their coalition remains unstable and intrinsically incapable of forging a principled new political majority. The realities of international affairs—the new balance of power, the unraveling of the Communist monolith, the irrepressibility of the neocolonial revolutions—have made hard-line anti-Communism seem increasingly irrational to the leaders and peoples of the West, including the United States. Nixon's bold and innovative foreign policy, as well as his reluctant accommodation to economic controls, has proved a heavy burden for conservatives, who could reasonably have expected to be able to stare down Watergate.

After all, every political tendency has its share of hooligans in high places, and it remains to be proven that Nixon abused his office more than John F. Kennedy did. Besides, conservatives never regarded Nixon as more than the disagreeable best they could get. The general policies of the Nixon-Ford administrations, however, have exposed their dilemma. A rational foreign policy may be harder or softer at the margin but can no longer avoid explicit recognition of Soviet parity and a wide sphere of influence. And to make matters worse, any attempt to curb Soviet power will fail unless based on closer relations with China and, probably, an increasingly tolerant attitude toward Berlinguer's "Eurocommunism." Similarly, economic policies at home may be more or less statist, but a general reversion to a free-market economy, which never existed anyway, is out of the question. Hence, the conservative movement has revealed itself as merely the right wing of American liberalism: more anti-Soviet, more willing to pursue an updated gunboat diplomacy against weak countries, less concerned with racial justice, and more tolerant of repressive measures against troublemakers. More. Less. But still marginal—still without a comprehensive philosophy to justify more than marginal political intervention and without a practical program to restructure society.

Not that political differences between liberals and conservatives lack all importance. Rather, their importance is narrowly circumscribed and decreasingly relevant to the larger political issues of today's world. Those larger issues concern the fate of capitalism and the political content of the socialism sweeping the world.

The challenge to American capitalism (i.e., to liberalism) will have to come from a socialist Left.

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It will not come easy or soon. At issue is the restoration of America's place as a leader of the forces in the world that stand for the reconciliation of freedom and social justice. A capitalist America may be able to impose upon the world a nuclear war ostensibly in opposition to Soviet totalitarianism, but suicide and mass murder are poor instruments of reform. A socialist America—an America that combined our nation's historic commitment to freedom with the equivalent of the commitment to social justice that the revolutions in property relations effected in the socialist countries have achieved—would seal the fate of totalitarianisms of every kind.

Not accidentally, both the USSR and the U.S. live in fear of Italian Communism, much as, despite pretenses, the capitalist West was by no means unhappy to see Czechoslovakia broken in 1968, although it shed genuine tears over the fate of Hungary in 1956. A counterrevolution was brewing in Hungary, which promised to undermine socialism throughout Eastern Europe, whereas Dubcek's Czechoslovakia promised a Western socialism that respected freedom and democracy. Who needed it? It would have challenged both the Soviet and American systems by demonstrating that socialism, freedom, and democracy are indeed compatible. Thus, Berlinguer's acceptance of NATO, the Common Market, and a "Eurocommunist" approach to foreign affairs portends much more than tactical maneuvering on the road to power.

THE language of American politics is absurd because our politics itself is absurd. Let us grant what every sleazy politician and windbag political scientist insists upon: the problems of the world are complex and defy simple formulas. That schoolboy observation, however, does not remove the responsibility to define major problems succinctly, however much honest disagreement may accompany the attempt.

Whatever the ideological differences, some things remain clear. Capitalism as an international socioeconomic system has lost half the world since 1917 and, as its own foremost leaders admit daily, is wallowing in a crisis of will and values as well as of economics and politics. The socialist countries have done admirably well in matters of rapid industrialization and "modernization" and, with good reason, expect to inherit the earth. But they have not succeeded, as the founders of the movement had expected, in protecting and expanding individual freedom and democratic forms of government. Many underdeveloped countries are struggling for a transition to socialism that would avoid the excesses of the Soviet model; others are struggling to develop within the capitalist orbit while avoiding imperialist exploitation (lots of luck); and all are struggling to avoid domination by stronger powers, capitalist or socialist. At home, we confront economic problems by no means unambiguously cyclical or temporary: it should not be necessary to catalogue the familiar miseries of inflation, unemployment, the decay of great cities; the demoralization of a substantial portion of the working class or, rather, the not-working class; and the startling loss of vision, will, and elementary values.

Does it make much sense to worry about who is a liberal and who is a conservative while the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world impotently watches its leading city go bankrupt, with prices skyrocketing; large numbers unemployed and increasingly unemployable; welfare rolls the size of which would be hilariously funny if not so ghastly; pimps, pornographers, and drug-pushers openly peddling their wares on every street corner instead of being rehabilitated making ice cubes in the Alaskan arctic; and, in a word, reduced to a sewer? However much smaller or greater the miseries of the rest of the world may be judged, more and more peoples are at least seriously addressing the social questions vital to their present and future. Sooner or later we too shall come to terms with the 20th century. When we do—when we raise a party committed to socialism, freedom, and a foreign policy capable of defending both—the least of our difficulties will concern the reordering of our political vocabulary.

EUGENE D. GENOVESE *is professor of history at the University of Rochester and the author of, among other works,* Roll, Jordan, Roll, The Political Economy of Slavery, *and* The World the Slaveholders Made.

Carl Gershman: It is now about a decade since American liberalism suffered a sea change. Prior to this there was little contention over the use of the terms liberal and conservative. Since an anti-Communist consensus prevailed on foreign policy, distinctions between the two terms were drawn on domestic policy, with liberals generally in favor of, and conservatives against, state intervention to regulate the market economy and to protect the individual from economic misfortune and racial discrimination. The break-up of the liberal coalition complicated the picture considerably.

It is generally assumed that this coalition fell apart as a result of the Vietnam war and racial violence. This is not a sufficient explanation, as we shall see, but it is certainly true that these events provided the occasion for a revision of liberal ideology. The rise of the anti-Vietnam protest movement brought an end to the post-World War II consensus on foreign policy. For a time this movement became indistinguishable in the public mind from liberalism, while opponents of the anti-war movement were all lumped together under

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the conservative rubric. Eventually the "liberal" opponents of the war rejected anti-Communism itself. Thus, the Democratic presidential nominee in 1972 pointed out that it wasn't enough for liberals just to support unilateral American withdrawal from Vietnam. It was also necessary to favor the elimination of "the last vestiges of the cold-war paranoia which led to our Vietnam involvement in the first place."

Liberal ideology on race underwent a revision of equal significance. The primary objectives of the civil-rights movement had been racial integration and the elimination of racial discrimination. The rise of militant black nationalism in the late 60's prompted many liberals to alter their views on these issues. Whereas liberals had previously opposed white segregationist demands for local control, they endorsed parallel demands by blacks seeking control over schools and other institutions in predominantly Negro areas. Similarly, they backed black demands for racial quotas even though this conflicted with an earlier liberal opposition to the use of racial criteria in hiring or school admissions and would undoubtedly be discriminatory against other groups.

Accompanying the revision of liberal political attitudes was a sharpening clash between the predominantly affluent and well-educated liberals and that vast section of the population called Middle America, a large part of which had once been part of the New Deal coalition. Loosed from their moorings among ordinary working Americans, liberals sought allies among the black poor and other groups which were outside the mainstream of political and economic life in the country. This affected the substance of liberalism's social and economic agenda.

Since the new liberal coalition basically excluded people who were involved in the production sector of the economy, economic growth was not a high liberal priority. For environmentalists and other liberals concerned with "the quality of life," economic growth was actually held to be undesirable. They reconciled their preference for a low-growth economy with their desire to satisfy the needs of the poor by increasingly turning to solutions involving one or another form of government transfer payments. McGovern's notorious "$1,000-giveaway" proposal during the 1972 campaign, like his sponsorship of a bill containing the proposal by the National Welfare Rights Organization for a government-guaranteed income floor of $6,500, reflected this line of thinking. The approach had many disadvantages, only one of them being its cost, so it was not surprising that some liberals (of the Jerry Brown school) eventually broke with it.

BUT if the new liberalism has fragmented because its positions on this and other issues have been politically vulnerable, its dominant tendency will probably not change. While it appeared on the American scene a decade ago in response to Vietnam and the race crisis, its existence was not tied to these events. The new liberalism was the product of changes in the population structure leading to the emergence of an enlarged intellectual stratum, sometimes called the New Class. Traditionally this group has acted as an appendage to either of the two major classes, business and labor. It has come to power in its own right only in relatively backward countries where these two classes have been weak. But by the mid-60's this group had grown large enough and had acquired sufficient influence in the political and cultural spheres to begin to act independently. The rise of the New Left was one manifestation of its new assertiveness, and it will not be the last.

The political character of New Class liberalism will probably not change very much, at least for the foreseeable future. In social and economic policy, it should remain committed to statist solutions, i.e., increased government control of industry, wage-price controls, government-imposed quotas, etc. In this sense its policies may be distinguished from traditional liberalism which never questioned the need for a highly productive private sector or the value of strong and independent trade unions. The new statist liberals are of course aware that the bureaucrats of the kind of state they favor would be drawn mostly from the New Class itself. Thus John Kenneth Galbraith's call upon the Left to "address itself to the development of a force of public managers of the highest level of proficiency."

In foreign affairs, the outlook of the new liberalism should continue to be characterized by what Andrei D. Sakharov has called "leftist-liberal faddishness." It is an outlook based upon bias more than simple naiveté. The New Class liberals constitute an opposition culture, and therefore they engage in criticism of democratic society almost as a matter of habit. When they affirm democratic values, they do so only by way of bemoaning their violation *by the democracies*, and by America in particular. Given their political views and social position, they have a natural affinity with the "progressive" anti-capitalist elites of Communist or Third Word countries.

IT SEEMS that liberalism has suffered a fate akin to that of socialism: it has been preempted by a political group that has perverted its meaning. It may or may not be worth contesting this group's hold on the word. But certainly some new terminology is needed to distinguish this so-called New Class liberalism from another kind of liberalism that is rooted in popular values and institutions, committed to progressive government, and concerned above all with the survival of freedom. This latter point of view may be conservative, but only in the sense that it seeks to conserve those values and institutions that have served democratic society well in the past. It should not be

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confused with the defense of special privilege and the resistance to democratic change which have traditionally characterized conservatism as it is conventionally known. If a new word is needed to identify the middle ground between the new liberalism and the old conservatism, we ought to make it a good one, for it is upon this ground that the fate of democratic civilization now rests.

CARL GERSHMAN *is executive director of Social Democrats, U.S.A.*

Nathan Glazer: Having unwisely labeled myself a "conservative" (a "mild conservative," it is true) in 1970, and having lived to see the label "neoconservative" fastened on me without real possibility of correction in 1976, I inevitably wonder about the problem of political language and labeling. In a word, I am not satisfied with the terms in use; I do not believe they communicate adequately a sufficient range of meaning; but they communicate enough, and in view of the economy of labels and the power of the mass media I see no chance of much affecting the use of liberal and conservative, Left and Right.

There is no question that the *content* of the terms has changed, and the symposium statement offers some key examples of this change. The content has been changing for a long time. A liberal position in the 19th century, in England and this country and in Europe, meant free trade, no government interference in the economy, along with—this still holds—civil and political liberties and the reduction of discrimination on the basis of religion, race, nation. Conservative seems to have changed less, and much of the change in its content is owing to the changes introduced in governmental policies by liberals and the Left—conservatives, as it were, trail behind, finding much that has been done reasonable enough after it has been done (of course conservatives have themselves, for reasons of political advantage or national strength, or out of real commitment, introduced some of the changes liberals and the Left have agitated for).

But whatever the change in the specific content of the terms, it seems to me the emotional feeling of each term has remained stable. A 20th-century liberal recognizes a kinship of mood and tone with a 19th-century liberal. And so with a conservative, or someone on the Left or on the Right. The fact that Marx agitated for specific governmental measures that are today matters of course and in no way seem radical does not matter when it comes to tone; he would recognize his descendants, they would recognize him. And so with John Stuart Mill, or Tocqueville. I am not suggesting anything so jejune as that what radicals propose today, liberals will institute tomorrow, and conservatives come to accept. My point is that whatever it is that Marx or those who *feel* (I mean the word literally) like him proposed yesterday or propose today does not, it seems to me, define the essence of the term radical, which seems to apply more to temperament. Marx thought parliamentary democracy was a farce when the suffrage was limited, and the privileges of wealth in voting were great (more than one vote for each person, depending on income, residence, status); his temperamental descendants feel the same when the suffrage is universal, when even prisoners and children may vote. Marx thought rights to freedom of speech and press irrelevant in judging the quality of the bourgeois societies in which he lived; his descendants, living in societies where such liberties are vastly extended, find them equally irrelevant in judging their quality. The temperament has remained the same despite the huge change in the conditions that are attacked.

One can see the same continuity among conservatives: they have always had a bias for institutions as they are—as they have persisted, and as they have worked—and have distrusted the rational reorganization of those institutions. The conservatives of the past defended very irrational traditional arrangements. Conservatives today are reduced to defending the electoral college. But one recognizes the kinship with those who defended rotten boroughs, or the inherited right to rule.

And liberal? One recognizes the kinship there, too. A bias toward change, but not extreme; a bias that sometimes becomes intolerant toward those who hesitate and ponder consequences. But a basic crick or strain was introduced in the continuity of the term liberal, in this country, in the time of Franklin Roosevelt. Liberalism, which up to then spoke basically of procedural matters—procedural changes, it is true, that were expected to work to the benefit of the poorer classes—suddenly shifted emphasis to concrete governmental policies that were expected to benefit the poor directly.

TEMPERAMENTAL continuity would seem to justify the continued use of all these terms. But a problem was introduced by both state Communism and fascism—a Left that was not truly and consistently of the Left, a Right that was not truly and consistently of the Right. The impact of these two new movements, bound together by their intolerance and savage suppression of dissent and difference, on the spectrum of political terms was not limited to the question of their own proper placement—it reached out to affect all the other groups, liberal and conservative, to the degree to which they accepted the Left or Right credentials of these movements. Conservatives who accepted fascism were indelibly and irrev-

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ocably marked; when fascism was crushed in World War II, they lost any chance of power. Conservatives who opposed fascism because of their basic commitment to liberty were ennobled thereby: it was they who took power in Europe and rebuilt it.

THE issue on the Left was—and remains—unfortunately less clear-cut. Communism, the aberration which calls itself of the Left, which undoubtedly comes out of the Left, which shares a temperamental kinship with the Left when it is a movement out of power but turns into the most effective, self-sustaining tyranny once it gets into power—yet a tyranny strengthened by its ability to appeal to the ideals of the Left—Communism retains and extends its power. Just as fascism indelibly marked conservatism, Communism marked liberalism. There were those who excused, understood, supported Communism; there were those who opposed it without concessions. But the issue between these two wings of liberalism is still in doubt, as it is not in doubt among conservatives, because Communism has lost neither its state power nor its powerful appeal to large numbers in the states it does not rule. Liberalism is potentially tarred, and thus one must always specify what kind of liberalism one is espousing. Because there are, strangely enough, liberals who find some of their ideals realized in Communist countries, the liberal who retains no sympathy at all for Communism finds he must perforce label himself a "traditional" or "19th-century" or "social-democratic" liberal, though none of these terms is really adequate.

I believe the English social psychologist H. J. Eysenck was right when he asserted, on the basis of empirical data concerning political attitudes and how they cluster, that two quite different axes were necessary today to define a political position, for there was no longer—if there ever was—a single political spectrum running from Left to Right. One axis is necessary to define one's attitude toward liberty; another to define one's attitude toward state intervention to increase equality. Some people try to twist these axes so that they become one, and assert that state intervention to promote equality must reduce liberty and is therefore identical with the reduction of liberty. I rather doubt there is any such simple relationship between the two: we have never seen as much state intervention to promote equality as we see in Western capitalist nations today, but liberty, defined in any practical sense, has never been greater or more widespread.

So the two axes are distinct. But in addition to this clarification on political positions, one must add one more: which axis is more important to you, the one that reaches from liberty to tyranny; or the one that reaches from inequality to equality? Or, to put it another way, which axis arouses the greater emotion? For me there is no question but that the axis reaching from liberty to tyranny is the more salient; I will generally vote for more equality, too, but coolly. Under these circumstances, I am equally satisfied to be called liberal or conservative, as long as both terms are understood to name liberty as the highest value.

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Eric F. Goldman: Recently that eminent semanticist, Mayor Frank L. Rizzo of Philadelphia, offered the definition, "A conservative is a liberal who got mugged the night before." The Mayor was not showing overwhelming insight; he was also not confusing things more than many current users of the words conservative and liberal.

The muddle over conservatism I leave to the conservatives except for two remarks I cannot forgo. Conservatives have a way of assuming that, while the meaning of liberalism is in disarray, conservatism is as trim as a Chippendale. They overlook the magnificent ludicrousness of placing in the same ideological category, say, Gerald R. Ford, who yearns to take America back to the Grand Rapids of the 20's, and William F. Buckley, Jr., who wants to convert it into 17th-century England. It is almost as funny to watch conservative politicians standing foursquare against baleful New Dealism when what they usually end up advocating amounts to, Not so much so fast. But, as I say, I am quite content to leave the tergiversations of conservatism to the brethren. The rest of us know what conservatives basically are: men who do not like the fundamental social trends of 20th-century America and since they know they cannot abolish them, seek to slow them and to mitigate their effects.

It is with the foggings surrounding liberalism that I am concerned, and they are plentiful enough. Once upon a time—centuries ago, it seems, in the 30's era of FDR—a modern American liberalism emerged from the many varying strands of decades of dissidence. All kinds of people marched under its banner, scalawags, pressure groups of single-minded greed, and crackpots as well as idealistic and broad-gauged reformers. Its techniques could be helter-skelter, mainly the use of federal power and money but not excluding a dependence on non-governmental institutions like labor unions, efforts to stimulate local governments, a touch of socialism in its enthusiasm for TVA. This liberalism really had no foreign policy;

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it was developed in America for American problems and significant factions within it could gyrate from a wary isolationism to a glowing one-worldism. Yet whatever the vagaries, for home affairs 30's liberalism did have a philosophy, a tone, a commitment—one so important in the programs it enacted and the attitudes it projected that it should be made the yardstick in any discussion of 1976 liberalism.

"AMERICA is promises," the poet of liberalism, Archibald MacLeish, sang in 1939. The promises could soar but at bedrock they called for continuing change which would broaden opportunities for the bottom groups and the ordinary man to get ahead in income and in social status. The ultimate goal was not equality but equality of opportunities and from there the individual would be on his own. Things were to be done within a capitalist system, however controlled. Generally, 30's liberalism was not socialist (giving socialism its accepted historical meaning, government ownership and management of the principal means of production) and this liberalism was strongly anti-Communist.

Then, gradually, it happened. During and after the New Deal a flood of legislation sought to use the federal government to broaden opportunities. By the late 60's a number of these programs scarcely seemed radiant successes and more than a few liberals began questioning massive Washington efforts and other techniques of 30's liberalism. Some of the critics themselves, some of their friends, and more of their enemies took to calling them neoconservatives; particular individuals within the group did seem to abandon liberalism's zest for helping the less fortunate or its confidence that workable social measures could be devised. Most were merely questioning particular tools or exuberances and remained well within the liberal tradition.

Similarly, 30's liberalism had given heavy emphasis to the needs of particular groups, especially labor. Today many a liberal is less concerned with factory workers, millions of whom are enjoying a comfortable life, than with the lower reaches of the middle classes. No Holy Writ of FDR-type reformism decreed that liberalism has to be focused on the same groups forever; on the contrary, implicit in its emotional makeup is an urge to put its shoulder behind a section or sections of the population which are seriously in trouble. The social reformer of 1976 is being thoroughly liberal when he stresses, among other concerns, the white-collar breadwinner scrounging amid severe inflation to support a wife and children on some ten or twelve thousand dollars a year.

Not so in the case of the New Left, the rise of which was so greatly encouraged by the squalid Vietnam war. Generalizing correctly about the New Left is not easy but many of its leaders have persistently called for a type of domestic change which is unquestionably socialism. In condemning U.S. foreign policy, they have come close to or gone the whole way in arguing that the United States is the chief or the only culprit in bringing on the cold war, an interpretation which clashes with liberalism's strong anti-Communism. Yet public discussions have shown a marked tendency to lump together liberalism and the New Left. The practice is about as accurate as making synonyms of pears and artichokes.

Sometimes as part of the New Left, sometimes not, came the swirl of the 60's—the disheveled blue jeans, the trashing of campuses, the drugs, or, usually unrelated, the demands for zero growth, busing, or abortion. There is nothing particularly liberal about being for or against any of these. What leads to semantic bedlam—and to serious inaccuracy—is to say that advocating them necessarily represents liberalism.

Liberals of the 30's had given little emphasis to the problems of the black man as the black man. In the early 60's they paid even less attention to the rising feminism. When the restiveness of these two groups burst into the affirmative-action doctrine and its usual implications, preferential treatment or quotas, the definition of liberalism was fuzzed still more. Were liberals not against unfair discrimination in the past? They were. The trouble with the next steps, those alleged ways to redress the past, is that they cut counter to the quintessential liberal philosophy of making opportunities equal but of opposing forced equalitarianism in the end results. And obviously, they can easily result in jobs being given on a basis anathema to generations of liberals—a basis different from that of merit. Affimative action, yes, but clearly the action-plus is, far from being liberal in any way, downright anti-liberal.

IN 1976, liberalism hardly appears a subject of much immediate significance. Perhaps it should not be and the task of social change left to newer and quite different ways of thinking. Perhaps—but it would be salutary to recognize the fact that in considerable measure the present American society is viable, to the extent that it is viable, because liberalism took long strides in democratizing its opportunities. It is highly defensible to go on and assert that today the general approach of authentic liberalism, more than that of any other doctrine, fits the practical interests of a vast segment, if not a majority, of the American people, and their deeper sense—at least in their better moments—of what being an American is all about. The public flight from liberalism appears to be largely a rejection of mis-definitions and mis-associations, whether the widespread assumption that liberalism must mean one technique—Washington, Washington, Washington, and heavy spending—or that it is the embodiment of the 60's.

If a 1976 conservative is not a liberal who got

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mugged last night, in many cases the conservative may well be a natural liberal whose conception of liberalism has been rough-and-tumbled into a caricature of its actual meaning.

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Walter Goodman: Given the alterations that the words conservative and, more especially, liberal have suffered and enjoyed since their importation to these shores, we need not panic over what has been happening to them in our time. Like other labels, they are not always fastidiously applied in the bustle of politics, and like other words, they play off each other and drift with the drifts of the society. Though some of us may not be happy with the way they are used today, they do still matter if only because their careless use muddies choices which are difficult enough even when seen clearly.

For those of us who adopted the liberal label in the 30's, at the age of ten or twelve, its meaning seemed spanking clear. It meant freedom abroad and fairness at home. Big government, capable of creating jobs, protecting civil rights, and defeating fascists, was not only a vehicle for liberal causes but came insensibly to be such a cause itself. It took the lessons of recent years to remind us of what early liberals had known—and indeed, based their liberalism upon—that big government is by no means necessarily benign or even intelligent. There is nothing intrinsically illiberal about decentralization of power, and surely it would be illiberally rigid as well as a bit fatuous for liberals today to cling to a belief in big government as a touchstone of their faith. The peril is that decentralization may become a kind of escape hatch from government responsibility, an excuse, for example, to let the cities sink or to duck hard decisions with a plea of community control.

The past decade has been unsettling for liberals of middle years. At the same time that we were watching the murderous excerise of power abroad by a liberal administration and the peculiar adventures of social planners, invariably identified as liberal, at home, we New Deal liberals were growing fat. Here we were, holding cushy jobs now with universities, classy law firms, big publications, even with the corporations we had once inveighed against. A certain self-satisfaction and inward-turning were inescapable, and for some the ever-increasing distance from the poor—who came to be seen mainly as crime statistics and general nuisances, not at all like the respectable, warmly remembered poor with whom we had grown up—resulted in a kind of retrenchment. Persons who still regard themselves as liberals are able now to take satisfaction in the notion that the poor are responsible for their own troubles. Quite a relief that, and very different from the charitable and, I think, fundamentally correct liberal proposition that the poor are more done to than doing —and indubitably a move toward a conservative view of humanity and society.

Other putative liberals reacted differently during the mid-60's, becoming cheerleaders for every demand of every self-proclaimed spokesman for the poor, the black, the young. Some of these were and still are glad to be called radicals—which raises a question of definition not, happily, part of our assignment here. Where the former group is sometimes suspicious to the point of paranoia, the latter is rapturous to the point of parody.

BOTH groups can claim, by the generous definition of seeking freedom and fairness, to be liberal. Is affirmative action fair? Well, yes and no. Is détente good for freedom? Well, no and yes and maybe. An element absent from both, however, is the American liberal's skepticism of, or merely lack of interest in, doctrine. Consistency has not been one of liberalism's strong points in this country over the past few decades. You try a program and see whether it works, and if it doesn't work, you try another program. Liberals are famous for their ifs and their buts: they might favor government ownership if . . . ; they sort of like capitalism but. . . . They hedge their bets, keep their options open, and are easy to make fun of. (The supporters of Henry Wallace liked to describe Truman supporters as sitting on a fence, with the left testicle a bit lower than the right. As it turned out, the non-Communists who gave themselves to the Progressive party were even more balled up.)

The insistence on, say, sweeping the varied problems of the ecology into the large issue of supporting or stunting economic growth runs against the liberal's disinclination to pose politico-technical questions in such big-deal terms. To be sure, this reluctance to face up to final consequences does not bespeak intellectual rigor, it has frequently enough been connected with evasion and soft-headedness, and both socialists and champions of the free market can often best the liberal in debate. Still, liberals as a group tend to be less bloody-minded than the competition, and their preference for dealing with matters piecemeal has helped them to work productively at the problems at hand and not get hypnotized by visions either of the millennium or of Armageddon, the fate of many an ideologue. In any case, some of the confusion and grief over the meaning of liberalism might be avoided if more liberals

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were able, in the spirit of native liberalism, to resist all-or-nothing formulations. One's liberal credentials ought not to rest on whether one treats school busing under all circumstances as a social commandment.

Political congregations in this country have a habit of trading or stealing ideas. To liberals, conservatives have typically seemed not so much conservationists as protectionists of privilege; so they pretty much remain—which, alas, is why all those privileged former liberals have turned conservative. Yet in the tumultuous 60's, numbers of liberals came to appreciate the conservative strengths—a connection with the past, a recognition of the fallibility of humankind, a respect for the processes of government and, yes, even for the much maligned system. The record of radicalism in the 60's does not now seem edifying, indeed it seems touched with lunacy—yet those radicals gave liberals instruction in openness, diversity, and personal courage, and forced upon the comfortably situated the recognition that many do not share their comforts. Even libertarians, whose compassion for the poor is under very tight control, have put liberals in touch with vital elements of liberalism, especially relating to individual freedoms, which have sometimes been lost in the smoke of social programs. Liberals, because they are relatively unburdened by doctrine, can be more open than the competition to the lessons of experience, more shameless about appropriating a sensible notion as their own, more ready to withdraw their allegiance from gods that fail. (Large numbers of liberals having once succumbed to the charms of the Soviet experiment, the charms of the Chinese experiment are nowadays being advertised by people to their Left.)

Does all of this move us toward a definition of liberalism? I like to think so: an attitude or prejudice which continues to put the poor and the powerless first, but not to the exclusion of all other individuals or groups or values; a respect for the rules along with an awareness that rules have a way of favoring those who make them; a continuing, inherently optimistic search for ways of getting closer to those old goals of freedom and fairness, with fewer illusions than we once had that we are likely to arrive. Not a foolproof definition, granted, but at any rate, it does no great violence to American liberalism's history or aspirations. As for people who insist on putting down other people as illiberal because they are opposed to quota systems, that is a bearable part of the liberal burden.

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Andrew M. Greeley: Any attempt to arrange response to political and social reality along a unidimensional continuum is manifestly mad—harmless perhaps, but still mad. The work of my colleagues, Nie, Verba, and Petrocik (*The Changing American Voter*) shows that ideological "constraint" (a word which political scientists use when they mean "consistency") increased during the 60's. However, an average gamma coefficient of .37—while impressive in our most imprecise of disciplines—hardly is unidimensionality. Most people then are not ideologues, or at least if they are, they are inconsistent ideologues.

However, the Left/Right, liberal/conservative unidimensionality is useful to any number of people:

> Headline writers who have room for no more than ten words.
>
> TV reporters who must reduce reality to a ninety-second explanation.
>
> The emotionally disturbed.
>
> College professors, clergymen, newspaper columnists and editorial writers, high-level government bureaucrats, and other products of elite higher education who need to be told what is proper to think before they know whether they can think it or not.
>
> New York intellectuals. (Whether you were a Shachtmanite or a Lovestoneite in the dear departed days of the 30's is still important. Outsiders like me, of course, can't tell the players even with a program.)

But when one hears that the Soviet Union is a leftist society—or even a socialist one—and that a millionaire head of a reactionary sect like Kemal Jumblatt in Lebanon is a leftist, one begins to wonder how useful even as shorthand the continuum really is. Does it, after all, matter whether the government tries more or less unsuccessfully to run industry or industry tries more or less unsuccessfully to run the government? The latter may be more efficient on the grounds that after fifty years the former would cause a shortage of sand in the Sahara; but the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union (or any other Communist society, for that matter) have not to do with who controls the means of production but how much personal freedom is tolerated. Capitalism (industry trying more or less unsuccessfully to run the government) may possibly make for more personal freedom, but only because it concentrates less power in that implacable enemy of personal freedom, the centralized bureaucratic modern state.

Once one has freed oneself from the need of wondering whether Jimmy Carter is more conservative than Lyndon Johnson was, one becomes free to create one's own multidimensional models of political and social reality. Unfortunately—and here I run the risk of being written off as a conservative or even, God forbid, a neo-

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conservative—that freedom is severely restrained by the inability of ordinary mortals to conceive four-dimensional or even three-dimensional space. A two-variable table has four cells, and most any of us can deal with that; but when you turn to a three-variable model you have eight cells and it is hard to remember who fits in which cell unless you have a doctorate in solid geometry. The sixteen cells of a four-variable model are useful for those who write articles for the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* about the permutations of church and sect, but are not very helpful for anything else unless one is willing to take refuge in multiple-regression models, and that is not a fair demand to make on any ordinary citizen.

So one ends up with the conclusion that a one-dimensional model of political reality is too simple and anything more than a two-dimensional model is too complex.

With a clear conscience, I therefore go on to describe my two dimensions: human nature and "modernization" (or "centralization").

THE first dimension represents a continuum on which one takes one's stand on the fundamental nature of human nature, a stand imposed on the Western world by the tormented soul of St. Augustine. Classical conservatism has agreed with the Manichees and the Reformation Protestants that human nature is fundamentally depraved. Classical liberalism has agreed with the good Irish monk Pelagius that human nature is fundamentally good—only adding the proviso that it can only be good when it is freed from the oppression of "them" (them being whoever the current fashionable scapegoat is—now, when in doubt, name the multinational corporations). Classical Catholicism has fudged the matter by saying that in most cases and under proper circumstances human nature manages to be slightly more good than evil (obviously the only sane and reasonable position).

In contemporary American discussion, this debate has been transmuted somewhat into the question of whether you can remake human nature quickly (both sides beginning with the Protestant assumption that the present variety is quite unsatisfactory). Note that such left-wing journals as the *Nation* and the *Christian Century* are endlessly excited about the possibility that in China or Cuba or some such place, "socialism" (read, oppressive political tyranny which would have long ago disposed of both journals and all their readers) is producing a new, unselfish ("sinless") kind of human being.

I always get puzzled when I hear such an account of justification-by-works from a spiritual descendant of Martin Luther. As a Catholic, I am much less dissatisfied with the present variety of humankind and part company with those who believe it can be remade quickly; but also with those who don't believe in the possibility of change or growth at all. Right of Center, in other words, with regard to the issue of quick changes of human nature (after the chains are disposed of), but Left of Center with regard to the more Burkean of the New Tories.

THE other dimension is "modernization"—which means one's position on whether the various revolutions of the past several centuries have produced a new social order which can adequately dispense with the old ties of community which once held human beings together. Do we now really have autonomous humankind, capable of operating purely on rational, formal, "scientific," secular, universalist norms? Or are the old ties of localism, family, ethnic group, church, friendship clique as important as ever, albeit in more subtle and transmuted fashions?

If you hold the former, you believe—as do both capitalists and socialists—in centralization; that is, in a highly controlled bureaucratic society in which experts make plans and everyone else carries them out (no dispassion here) regardless of any other concern beyond the good of the total society (read either "the stockholders" or "the people"). If, on the other hand, you believe in the critical importance for both human happiness and social effectiveness of the dense, organic group of relationships which exist outside the bureaucratic organizational chart, then you end up with E. F. Schumacher, Jerry Brown, G. K. Chesterton, Pierre Proudhon, and Pius XI calling for "subsidiarity" ("no longer than necessary," if not exactly "small is beautiful"), decentralization, and communalism.

At least some of us—anarchist or Catholic—on the Left side of this dimension would believe that it is far the more important of the two because the greatest enemy of human happiness in the world today, as well as the most serious obstacle to the development of social justice, is the soulless, musclebound, dim-witted dinosaur called the corporation—and it doesn't much matter whether it makes cars, sells books, tries to teach children, negotiates with management, or purports to preach God's word; nor in fact does it matter very much whether it calls itself capitalist or socialist.

So my two dimensional model looks like this:

		Quick Perfectibility of Human Nature	
		—	+
Modernization	—	"Catholic"	"Anarchist"
	+	"Capitalist"	"Socialist"

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I would hasten to add that Catholicism has no monopoly on the cell in which I've placed it. A belief in the organic society and the relatively slow growth of human goodness is typical also of certain kinds of more traditional Protestant and Jewish thought, as well as, if Schumacher is to be believed, of the Buddhist ethic.

Furthermore, unless I am much mistaken, it is where most of the Founding Fathers would have ended up—by the time of the Constitution, at any rate, if not yet at the time of the Declaration.

Out in the neighborhoods where people—as opposed to editors, professors, church bureaucrats, and commentators—live, it looks like the only sane and reasonable position.

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Gertrude Himmelfarb: In the world I inhabit—New York academia—the terms liberalism and conservatism have a simple and clear valuation: liberalism is good except when it is faulted for not being liberal enough (i.e., radical), and conservatism is bad. In seminars and committees, in books and reviews, to characterize anyone as conservative is automatically to damn him. There might be some discussion about whether he is in fact conservative, whether his opposition to the war in Vietnam or his subscription to some liberal cause absolves him from that charge. But lacking such evidence of liberal grace, he is assumed to be irredeemable.

Because conservatism has been placed outside the pale of civilized discourse, a new term has come into being to permit us to speak about the unspeakable. This, as I understand it, is the function of neoconservative. It is a euphemism for those conservatives who cannot be dismissed out of hand, who have sufficient intellectual stature to make their presence felt. Liberals find the term useful to demonstrate their own broad-mindedness. (I recently heard President Ford described, in a gesture of magnanimity, as neoconservative.) And conservatives find it useful to gain a hearing for views which, under the old label, would be rejected out of hand.

Is all of this a semantical game? Does it matter that conservatism has been reduced to a derogatory term, if neoconservatism is available in its stead? I think it does matter, and that in this instance, as in so many others, semantics is not "merely" semantics. Had conservatism simply disappeared as a respectable term without anything to replace it, one might have been justified in thinking that it disappeared for good reason, that the phenomenon it describes no longer exists, rendering the term as archaic as the phenomenon itself. The fact that it has been succeeded by neoconservatism suggests the opposite: that some such term is necessary to describe some such reality.

As a historian I might be expected to welcome the new term. It does seem to give a historical dimension to a discussion that is all too often painfully unhistorical. It would be agreeable to think that neoconservatism was intended to delineate the latest version of a tradition that includes Hume (who called himself a Tory), Burke (who called himself an Old Whig), Disraeli (who called himself a Tory Democrat), Bagehot (who called himself a Liberal), and sundry other worthies. But if this were the intention, why has the term liberalism not undergone a similar mutation? Surely modern liberalism is significantly different from the doctrines espoused by its greats —Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, even (to come to modern times and these shores) Woodrow Wilson or Franklin Roosevelt. Why do we not have a neoliberalism to signify this historic change? The answer, of course, is that liberalism as a label has remained sufficiently respectable, if not honorific, to survive the considerable substantive changes in the doctrine. Conservatism, on the other hand, having become an invidious term, is no longer useful for descriptive purposes. Thus neoconservatism enters the scene as an attempt to describe a reality that persists in spite of all the intellectual proscriptions against it.

Again, as a historian I find myself in the paradoxical situation of belittling some of the historical niceties that have been imported into this discussion—the argument, for example, that the categories liberalism and conservatism have outlived their utility because they have undergone so many sea changes. How often have we been told that 19th-century liberalism (laissez-fairism) is 20th-century conservatism, and, conversely, that 19th-century conservatism (paternalism) is 20th-century liberalism. Of course (although only to a degree, with reservations). But have we discarded other terms—Protestantism, capitalism, socialism, family, state, society—because they have undergone comparable changes? The historian, like any intelligent person, tries to respond to these phenomena in all their particularity and complexity. Whatever their past configurations and present confusions, liberalism and conservatism do connote alternative modes of political thinking and alternative directions of social policy—alternatives that are not as clear-cut, as consistent or coherent, as the intellectual or political scientist might like, but that are sufficiently distinctive for most purposes.

The differences, as I see them, are matters of

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disposition and degree but are nonetheless real. The liberal tends to be more of an activist in social and political affairs; he is more prone to legislate and administrate, to call upon the state to do things, change things, direct things. He tends to be more of an activist because he is more of an optimist; he thinks it better to do than not to do because he believes things can and will be made better, that all that prevents them from being better is a failure of will or the obstructiveness of vested interests. He is more of an optimist because he is more of a rationalist; he believes that reason can identify the problems that need solving, can determine the solutions, can point the way to the better society that is the object of his activity, and can create a more rational order than that bequeathed to us by the irrationalities of history and the conflicts of interests. He is, finally, more of a rationalist because he is more of a secularist; he sees the solution of social problems and the attainment of a rational order as lying within man's capacities; he looks to social institutions, above all to the state, for redemption; and he tends to be impatient with otherworldly and non-official distractions that interfere with his activities and his ends.*

The conservative tends to have more (again it is a question of degree) of the opposite qualities. He is more passive in political and social matters because he prefers the evils he knows to those he does not know—but that he can well imagine. He is more resistant to change because he has no confidence that change will be for the better; indeed he suspects it may be for the worse. He has less faith in reason and will as the moving forces in society because he is more convinced of the recalcitrance of social institutions, the perverse effects of good intentions, the multiple and conflicting pressures of vested interests (including the vested interests of reformers). And he feels less urgency about political and social reforms because he looks to other areas for the satisfaction of some of man's most basic needs—to the family, religion, job, neighborhood, to a host of private associations and personal commitments.

These characteristics of liberalism and conservatism—descriptions of tempers of mind, of dispositions rather than specific policies—do not quite coincide with the usual terms of debate: big *vs.* small government, public *vs.* private enterprise, egalitarian *vs.* libertarian measures. Nor can they be readily identified with party labels. One can be a Democrat and conservative, or a Republican and liberal. One can even be a Social Democrat and, on many critical issues, conservative. (And some capital-C Conservatives are anything but conservative in my sense, which is why the term radical Right is so appropriate.) All of this comes as no surprise; the non-ideological character of American parties has long been recognized. But to the extent to which the parties are non-ideological, it behooves us to clarify the dispositions that determine our positions on this or that issue, that define the alternatives confronting us.

HAVING said all of this by way of justifying these terms, I must confess that I think it a lost cause to insist upon them. In America the label conservatism has been so thoroughly vitiated that it is hopeless to try to rehabilitate it. And if that term must be abandoned, so too must liberalism, for without the one as a foil, the other becomes either truistic or trivial. I end up, therefore, where I suspect many in this symposium will, by calling for a moratorium on both of these terms.

Where I probably differ from other contributors is in my sense of how much all of us, liberals and conservatives alike, will have lost by this solution. Perhaps it is because my own intellectual roots are in England more than in America that I appreciate just how much will be lost. In England, where both terms have retained their moral legitimacy and intellectual respectability (again, not as party labels but as ways of thinking about political and social affairs), the debate has been more fairly joined. But it is not only a matter of fair debate. What the English experience suggests is how much the protagonists in the debate have profited by their association with each other. One of the reasons for the all-too-frequent failings of American conservatism—its lapses into philistinism and vulgarity—is the fact that, having been ruled out of the intellectual community, it has become anti-intellectual in turn. And some of the common faults of American liberalism—its self-righteousness and complacency—may be accounted for by the absence of any respectable opposition, any need to take seriously another mode of thought.

It was an Englishman—and liberal—who best expressed the mutual relationships of liberalism and conservatism, properly understood. "A Tory philosopher," wrote John Stuart Mill, "cannot be wholly a Tory, but must often be a better Liberal than Liberals themselves; while he is the natural means of rescuing from oblivion truths which Tories have forgotten, and which the prevailing school of Liberalism never knew."

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* These characterizations of liberalism may help explain why I regard radicalism as existing on the same spectrum as liberalism, at the far Left of it, so to speak. But even if one locates radicalism outside of that spectrum, one might argue that it does not present itself as a serious alternative; it is not a significant part of either the social reality or the public consciousness.

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Sidney Hook: Recently a young New Left educator denounced me as a *conservative* because, among other things, I still believed in "consecutive thinking." He also expressed scorn for the "rotten, pragmatic *liberalism*" of John Dewey which allegedly had spawned the cold warriors of the Truman era. He called himself a *radical*, and seemed puzzled when I observed that his thought ways, or their absence, were more distinctive of what I had encountered among *reactionaries* all my life.

The words I have emphasized above, and their cognate expressions, are today more often used as epithets of abuse or edification than of description. They are sometimes employed in the media to conceal or obscure the truth, as when a Communist is referred to as a leftist or an extreme liberal. On the other hand, upholders of a common-sense security program that would bar from sensitive posts in government those who owe a superior allegiance to a foreign government or to a subversive underground movement are dubbed extreme rightists. Sometimes worse.

Ideally, political and social discourse would be less confusing intellectually if we could avoid labels that are mainly emotive in meaning, and discuss only the issues. The labels often get in the way of a clear definition of what the issue is, and of what is being affirmed or denied. I have found it easier to come to agreement on specific issues of government regulation, health care, quality education, and what constitutes invidious discrimination if terms like socialism, socialized medicine, racism, and affirmative action are not injected into the discussion. Most of the people I know, especially in the academy, are immediately predisposed to a cause or a policy if it is designated liberal. A small but growing number react the same way to what is called conservative, and are turned off by what is labeled liberal.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to avoid the use of terms like liberal and conservative as shorthand expressions indicating general attitudes without appearing circumlocutory or pedantic. The problem is to assign some non-arbitrary descriptive meaning to these words that will satisfy common usage. But there are varieties of common usage, and they change in time. This suggests that the appropriate approach to their use should be explicitly contextual and historical. Otherwise, the use of the term in its generic sense enables those who are hostile to the values customarily associated with it to masquerade as its defenders.

THE political liberalism of Locke and Jefferson stressed tolerance of heretical differences of opinion, the rule of just law, and government by consent. During the 30's I found it helpful to coin the phrase "totalitarian liberals" to designate persons who, claiming to be liberals, acted in concert with the Communist party enthusiastically to endorse the intolerance and terror of Stalin's regime, and to defend the monstrous frame-ups of the Moscow trials, as well as the subsequent purges. Among the worst of these was Lillian Hellman, who in addition viciously attacked the efforts of the Commission of Inquiry headed by John Dewey to investigate the truth of the charges.* The evils they protested in the United States, and in Spain, Germany, and Italy, they condoned in the Soviet Union where, at the time, the excesses against humanity were of a far greater magnitude. During the late 40's, another type of liberal emerged whom I called "ritualistic liberals." They carried tolerance to the point of tolerating the actively intolerant. By refusing to distinguish between "heresy" and "conspiracy" they prepared the ground for the demagogy of McCarthy. Resolutely anti-fascist, they refused to regard themselves as anti-Communist but eagerly avowed their anti-anti-Communism, as do their lineal descendants today.

On the domestic American scene, liberalism seems to be undergoing a sea change in some respects. This is most evident in education. I refer to liberals who ardently defend both equality of opportunity and reverse discrimination of the quota system. A continuous strand in classical and modern liberal thought has been its commitment to greater freedom for the individual. This was true when the stress was on freedom *from* arbitrary restraints—on *negative* freedom. It was no less true when emphasis shifted to freedom for growth and self-development—on *positive* freedom through greater participation in social life. In both cases it was the individual person who was to be liberated regardless of the number and character of his or her social ties, origins, or relations. It was the individual person who was the locus and carrier of moral values and human rights. With respect to all careers that were to be open to talent, the liberal, therefore, professed to be blind to color, deaf to religious dogma, indifferent to sex and national origin. Until recently he would have regarded as logically contradictory the operating maxim of the civil service—"positions or awards should go to the best qualified candidate"—and the policy of numerical goals or quotas. Today, however, the bureaucratic despotism which has imposed numerical goals and specific time schedules as an intrinsic part of the affirmative-action program demanded of institutions of higher education, has the support of many persons who call themselves liberals, and militant liberals at that. This is not the only respect in which the American Civil Liberties Union has abandoned liberal principles.

HOWEVER, even if one takes a historical and contextual view of the usages of the terms liberal and conservative, one may still ask: what, if anything,

* Cf. *Soviet Russia Today*, March 1937, the *Daily Worker*, April 28, 1938, and the *New Masses*, May 3, 1938.

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differentiates all the usages of the term liberal from the usages of the term conservative? If we take the long view, is it possible to discover doctrines or attitudes that tend to differentiate the liberal and the conservative wherever and whenever we find them arrayed against each other?

At the risk of gross oversimplification I suggest that the most significant division can be drawn with respect to two families of doctrine: (1) the concept of human nature, and (2) the concept of human rights, especially the right to property.

1. The conventional view—that the liberal believes man is inherently good and is corrupted by defective social institutions, whereas the conservative believes man inherently evil regardless of nurturing social institutions—seems clearly inadequate. Both Rousseau and Calvin are mistaken. Their views exclude each other but do not exhaust the alternatives. The intelligent liberal may be quite skeptical of the natural goodness of man; the intelligent conservative need give no credence to the metaphysical or theological tenet of the natural depravity of man whether in its Augustinian or Niebuhrian form. Both can, and do, believe that man is a finite creature, limited in intelligence, subject always to the temptations and corruptions of power, yet sometimes capable of rising above them, whose conduct therefore varies from the admirable to the contemptible. What divides them is their view of the extent to which man's nature is modifiable by cultural institutions. Both may be staunch advocates of democracy: the conservative because he distrusts power that is not limited and responsible, the liberal because he has faith that man, however finite, can learn from his experience. More important, the liberal believes that the norms and values by which experience is judged and redirected arise out of experience and cannot intelligibly be drawn from a source that transcends experience. Conservatives are of varied schools: they believe that these norms and values are derived either from revelation or some source beyond experience or from a historical tradition whose authority should be immune from critical reconstruction in the present.

2. The liberal regards property as a human right but since its exercise may conflict with other human rights, its claims may have to be modified or overridden. Since no right is absolute, when conflicts of rights arise, he relies upon the processes of intelligence to make the choice whose consequences will best strengthen the entire structure of human rights in society. The conservative regards property either as an absolute right or as one which as a rule is of overriding importance. When he recognizes the conflict of rights, he distrusts the role of critical intelligence in modifying institutions to resolve it. He prefers to rely upon gradual changes in historical use and wont, the weight of ancient tradition, or the literal text of a sacrosanct constitution.

Finally, I believe it does make a considerable difference as to how these large terms are used. Although it is desirable to discuss issues and problems without resort to them, there is no dearth of persons on the political scene who make psychological capital of their abuse. Too many citizens still react to these terms in ways that influence their readiness to listen and their capacity to evaluate what they hear. We should insist that when these words are used, their meaning should be spelled out. And we should hold their users to consistent usage. Since most citizens of the United States in the 20th century regard themselves as democrats and liberals, we must not allow those who at heart are enemies of a free and open society to usurp the use of these terms.

A rose by any other name does not smell as sweet in our media-dominated society.

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H. Stuart Hughes: It would be difficult not to be dissatisfied with the current usage of the words liberal and conservative. In contemporary America they have lost nearly every shred of clear meaning. They have been reduced to handy verbal tools for political manipulation. Perhaps the only identifiable purpose they serve is as a barometer of the ideological climate: whether one or the other figures in public discourse as a term of approbation or reproach may give us some clue to the presumed temper of the electorate.

But to say this much is to grant that the epithets conservative and liberal can still perform a basic function. At the very least they may suggest two contrasting casts of mind. The one is closed, fearful, and skeptical of the possibilities of human improvement. The other is open to experiment and inclined to believe, in the words of Albert Camus, that "there are in human beings more things to admire than things to scorn." Indeed, the visceral response of the unsophisticated public may be a surer guide in these matters than the rhetoric of theorists. The proverbial man in the street can tell a conservative from a liberal not so much by the stand he or she takes on specific issues as by the emotions aroused or the imagery evoked. (I recall that when I was running for office a number of years ago a member of my audience whom I had evidently angered asked me rather truculently, "Are you a liberal?"—to which, momentarily taken aback by the simplicity of a question that swept aside the careful arguments and distinctions I had been making, I replied after a moment's reflection, "Of course.")

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Such has always been true of the conservative and the liberal positions. In the early 19th century, when the words first gained currency, they denoted the two most commonly-held attitudes toward the revolutionary and Napoleonic tumults that had just ended. Conservatives wholeheartedly condemned the changes the preceding decades had witnessed; liberals recognized the need for innovation, while deploring and hoping to avoid in the future the violence that had punctuated the revolutionary quarter-century. Thus from the very start the conservative attitude was the less intellectually taxing of the two; the liberal was the more nuanced and discriminating. It was not true, as subsequent polemicists have maintained, that the latter was invariably optimistic: one has only to recall the doubts about democracy of a classical liberal like Tocqueville. Where conservatives had a certain foursquare self-assurance, liberals were riven by scruples and hesitation.

How liberalism changed in the 19th century—and has changed once again in our own time—was not in becoming more worldly-wise, but in narrowing itself to the advocacy of short-term pragmatic goals. The great liberals have never been politically naive; by the same token they have always been aware of the perils of public office. Outsiders by definition, they have tended to lose their bearings when called on to run the establishment. In the mid-19th century a large part of them succumbed to the allure of making themselves propagandists for laissez-faire economics. A century later the same was true of the proponents of government-sponsored economic growth. The point is not that these two positions were in apparent contradiction. Nor is it that either was mistaken; in both cases liberal action was prompted by urgent needs. The point is rather that the "establishment liberals" of both periods, in congratulating themselves on the pragmatism of their methods, dropped along the way the philosophical sweep and openness of their own ideological tradition. For critical inquiry and self-questioning, they substituted the complacency of expertise.

The overriding problem for American liberals in the last quarter of the 20th century, then, is to shake loose from entanglement with vested interests. Such interests obscure the ability of those in power to judge individual issues on their merits. Where threats to entrenched positions are constantly perceived or suspected, liberals begin to behave like conservatives. Still worse, they lose the capacity to be honest with themselves and others—without which they cannot rigorously probe the fabric of society. Obscurantism and obfuscation have ordinarily been the property of conservatives; of late liberals too have been straying into these pastures.

Witness the current panic over affirmative action. Properly understood, this is an eminently liberal goal. While liberals have frequently been elitist—while they have quite correctly set themselves above the unthinking reflexes of the lumpenproletariat or the hard-hats—their notion of an elite has included ready access by any highly qualified and motivated person. Hostile to all forms of racial or ethnic or religious *or sexual* discrimination, a true liberal cannot help rejecting the imposition of quotas as a cure. Nor have I heard any responsible leader speak in such terms. The current fear of quotas derives for the most part from a defensive reaction on the part of the liberal establishment. Feeling threatened in his own preserve, the erstwhile liberal intellectual fails to see affirmative action for what it really is—a concerted effort to bring to the surface, and thereby to eradicate, the prejudice, largely unconscious, that has kept those discriminated against from fair competition in an open job market.

I suspect that in these matters sentiments based on race or ethnic origin or religion have proved less recalcitrant than the primitive terror and hostility which women inspire in men. My experience in major university faculties suggests that the average white male would prefer to have as his colleague another male—whatever his color—than a woman of equal ability. For precisely here is the rub: at the deeper levels of his psyche the average man—the average *intellectual* man—finds it impossible to accept the notion that a woman is as good as he is. It remains true today, as John Stuart Mill wrote more than a century ago, that "the generality of the male sex cannot yet tolerate the idea of living with an equal."

To cite Mill is to return to liberal fundamentals. This is what the liberalism of today requires more than anything else. Conservatism is currently thriving: it needs no help from outsiders.

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Alfred Kazin: The commonly fraudulent and intellectually useless terms liberal and conservative can be understood only as reactions to the essential fact of our recent history: the great age of American power and dominating influence since 1945.

A conservative may once have meant a slaveholder or segregationist who naturally believed in as little interference from Washington as possible. By the end of the 19th century, the established custom of big business preaching laissez-faire but using and milking the federal government had exposed the hypocrisy and total class interest of our moneyed and powerful conservatism. There were—there still are—many private cultural and

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religious conservatives—i.e., people who believe in sustaining their own traditions. But as the folly of Prohibition showed, such groups were by American standards increasingly quaint, clearly out of step with a go-getting society geared to instant satisfaction of its many wants. Such true conservatives were of necessity totally non-political.

After 1945, an American political conservative was usually a supernationalist and a lobbyist for some special economic interest. If, as often happened, he was also a disenchanted ex-Leninist like James Burnham or Irving Kristol, he tended in the way of converts to keep his old elitist principles but to transfer his heart's desire from the intellectual fantasy of human nature made "new" by "socialism" to the tough "realism" of accepting and abetting everything political racketeers like Nixon and McCarthy did in the name of anti-Communism. Who is not with us is against us. It was not only the Stalinists who practiced that. The reign of terror against innocent people, neutrals, in what Silone called the war between Communists and ex-Communists, is something I shall always remember about some American "conservatives."

A conservative, it turned out even before Nixon hysterically gave the game away, came on as a cultural fetishist of his childhood relics. But on real issues—not the Beatles and long hair and the young—he showed himself as a ruthless authoritarian hater of all political opposition. He was not "sick" but a wholly opportunistic flag-waver not even able to understand that other people usually know what we really love and hate and when we lie to conceal this.

Still! The ruthlessness, jingoism, ferocity, militarism, and human callousness of these American conservatives were fostered by a cultural and moral vacuum in American life that resulted from the dizzying pace of change and the worship of technological progress in every sphere of life. There was soon no tradition to uphold even among many Catholics—no tradition even in the private sector. And more and more, as one can see from the American family in our day, some of the most cherished private traditions of religion and culture proved weak indeed under the continous battering of a "real world" in which it was impossible to be decently poor, unaffiliated, unpatriotic, uninterested in what the media were braying at us night and day.

In the exciting atmosphere of the new bonanza, many Americans, especially if they were still traumatized by the Depression that ended only with the war and its fantastic mobilization of American resources, turned out to be strong on security but weak on liberty, democracy, the individual. The true libertarians turned out to be old-fashioned intellectuals, writers, artists. It was the occasional despised Southerner, like Hugo Black, who turned out to be a true friend of American liberty, not the brilliant apologist for national security.

Conservatism prevailed—it will prevail, no matter how many ambiguous liberals like Carter are elected—because the usual liberal (Hubert Humphrey is the most honest and futile example) wants nothing more than to see the disadvantaged get a greater share of the cake. Humphrey, like most of us, cannot face the unrepresentativeness of the American economy. Conservatism prevails because most Americans naturally want the benefits of American power. To say nothing of the protection of American power on a globe where democracy is now limited to parts of North American and Western Europe. Conservatism prevails, too, as an instinctive assertion whenever American radicalism—always a minority position in a society where the satisfied customers are sure that they exceed the unsatisfied—takes the form of ethical terrorism.

YET with all this, American conservatism tends to be frightened of the outside world and of the wretched refuse increasing on our teeming shore. It is not confident of its own principles. It feels itself, understandably, cornered and isolated in the world at large—unable to admit, much less to master, the widespread disaffection with capitalism. In his recent notes from Israel in the *New Yorker,* even so brilliant an observer of the human species as Saul Bellow cannot accept the picture of deep social change in Europe today presented to him by such moderate men as Abba Eban and Shlomo Avineri. An important part of the problem—and to me conservatism is a problem—is that Jews frightened by totalitarianism and the Holocaust tend to yearn for tradition. liberty, tranquility, assurances of personal and social safety on an American model that may just not be that dependable.

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Jeane Kirkpatrick: The terms liberal and conservative are devoid of specific meaning, laden with affect, entangled in fashion, and involved in an ongoing power struggle of momentous importance.

These terms are not only affected by their social, historical, and political context; their *whole* meaning varies with the time, place, and speaker. This is the reason that Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill can be called liberals because they affirmed the importance of individual economic freedom, and Friedrich von Hayek can be called a conservative because he takes precisely the same position; that support for, say, homosexual marriage or the "decriminali-

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zation" of marijuana can be termed liberal because they extend the sphere of individual freedom from governmental restraints, and busing, which does exactly the opposite, can also be called liberal; it is the reason that George Meany, William F. Buckley, Jr., Georges Marchais, John Wayne, Gerald Ford, Chou En-lai, Roy Wilkins, Margaret Thatcher, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and Joseph Stalin can be called conservatives.

It has been argued that liberalism has a core concern with individual freedom while conservative and radical philosophies emphasize collectivities (guilds, nations, races, classes, and so forth), and though a sizable literature in political philosophy reflects such a conception, contemporary usage, which often links liberalism with coercive social programs and détente with coercive nations, does not. It is also sometimes argued that liberal and conservative express orientations to change, so that a liberal is one who favors change *per se* and a conservative one who resists or opposes it. But a definition that positions people in relation to change regardless of the status quo in which they are situated, or of the direction in which they move, cannot be very useful in distinguishing among political types. Because the terms have no fixed referents, the liberalism or conservatism of specific policies—say, the Humphrey-Hawkins bill or the Jackson amendment—can only be settled arbitrarily, and not by rational inquiry or debate.

The terms Left and Right are, if anything, worse. In addition to their ambiguity, these terms also tacitly commit those who use them to an extraordinary philosophy of history according to which events and people can be arrayed on a simple universal political spectrum stretching through time and space—enabling us to locate any person or position on a single spectrum. Thus, of French politics it is said that Krivine is Left of Marchais who is Left of Mitterrand who is Left of Giscard who is Right of Chaban-Delmas who was Left of Pompidou. And of the Communist world it is said that Mao is Left of Fidel who is Left of Brezhnev who is Left of Berlinguer (or is he?). Descriptions such as these make dyslexics of us all.

An adequate effort to place political figures in relation to one another (more or less Left, more or less liberal) would begin from the fact that contemporary politics is multidimensional and that these dimensions do not necessarily hang together. At least four mutually independent dimensions are involved: first, a political dimension which includes attitudes toward competitive elections, tolerance of dissent, rule of law; second, an economic dimension which includes attitudes toward private property, distribution of wealth, public ownership, governmental regulation; third, a cultural dimension which includes attitudes toward authority and toward order in public and private spheres; fourth, a foreign-policy dimension which includes attitudes toward defense, supranational bodies, the Third World, détente, and related matters. And the problem of labeling these dimensions remains. Contemporary usage is consistent in terming as Left or liberal those economic positions which favor public control or ownership of resources and an egalitarian distribution of wealth. But what of the political spectrum—shall we call those positions Left which favor majority rule, minority rights, and rule of law, in which case the Communist governments are Right and we are Left, or should we reverse the labels? And what of the cultural dimension—shall we call Right those positions and organizations that favor hierarchy and order and Left those favoring more egalitarian distribution of status and loose, decentralized organization, in which case the Gaullist UDR is Left of the French Communist party? Finally, how do we label foreign policy: are those who support political freedom and free emigration and oppose political imprisonment Left, in which case Daniel P. Moynihan is a leading exponent of the Left, or do the PLO and IRA, George Habash and Idi Amin, represent the Left? The questions are not frivolous and their answers are by no means self-evident.

Does it really matter? Thoughts are no clearer than the words in which they are expressed and, as always, murky thinking obfuscates reality, causing that which is good to appear less good and that which is evil less evil. Political positions which would be perceived as morally untenable if clearly stated can be made to seem acceptable when they are clothed in the appropriately fashionable euphemisms. Godly people who would never dream of personally harming anyone support murder and kidnapping by terrorists conceived as Third World liberation movements, justify slave labor and starvation when it is called reeducation. The possibility of thinking clearly about development and international affairs dwindles when we lump together politically, economically, technically, culturally diverse peoples into the single category, Third World; the possibility of thinking clearly about southern Africa or anywhere else on that troubled continent declines when we describe dictatorships as majority rule; the possibility of thinking clearly about the Middle East decreases when we term Zionism racism; and the possibility of thinking clearly about the whole political world is diminished by our hapless efforts to fit complex realities into the meaningless yet misleading categories of Right and Left.

The theory which underlies these categories cannot accommodate political reality. And the distortions which result from trying to fit data on the real world into the categories of Left and Right are not random. Partly because of historical accident but mainly because of decades of propaganda, the Left end of this imaginary spectrum associates Communist dictatorships with demo-

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cratic socialism and other constitutional democracies. This in turn encourages us to think of some dictatorships (say the Cuban, Soviet, or Chinese) as more democratic or at least more progressive because Left, and others (say Chile, Spain, or Brazil) as more reactionary because Right. Such beliefs invite unwarranted inferences about the practices and moral qualities of the regimes and discourage investigation of actual distributions of power, the actual production and distribution of goods, and the actual quality of everyday life of people in these societies.

In his astringent essay, "Politics and the English Language," George Orwell emphasized that the justification of tyranny proceeds by way of vague, pretentious euphemisms. Because they encourage us to focus on meaningless abstract attributes ("Leftness," "Rightness") instead of actual characteristics of persons and polities, the terms liberal and conservative, Left and Right, contribute to our disorientation in the political world and complicate the defense of human freedom.

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Irving Kristol: I don't know who first came up with the term neoconservative—probably a writer for *Time* or *Newsweek*—and I am certain it was not meant to be in any way flattering. Its main intent was surely to designate me and others as something less than liberal—i.e., something less than certifiably sound of heart and mind. Still, the more I think about the term, the more I like it.

What I like most about it is the echoes it evokes in my mind of neoorthodoxy in religion—that current of thought represented by Barth, Tillich, and Niebuhr in Protestantism, by Maritain and Gilson in Catholicism, by Rosenzweig and Buber in Judaism. These men are my favorite theologians of this century. I have read and reread them, have been profoundly affected by them, and have no doubt that my neoconservative political orientation indirectly owes much to them. And it pleases me to think that I may be up to something in political thought which bears a resemblance, no matter how faint, to their work in religious thought.

But I also believe we are talking about much more than a merely personal fancy. For there is unquestionably a connection between religious orthodoxy and political conservatism. Religion begins and ends in orthodoxy—the whole purpose of religion is to establish a viable and vital orthodoxy to whose values and rituals assent is freely given. Similarly, politics begins and ends in conservatism—the whole purpose of politics is to establish a viable and vital polity to whose values and mores assent is freely given. In both religious orthodoxy and political conservatism, the basic assumption is that human perfection (and human happiness) is most closely approximated when virtue is achieved through law-abidingness.

This assumption, of course, is more often than not at variance with reality. It is in the nature of things that what is born must decay. The institutions and values of orthodoxy-conservatism become routine, formalistic, petrified—in short, devoid of human meaning. Dissatisfaction, dissent, even heresy become rife. The search for a new orthodoxy begins—as does the effort to breathe new life into the old tradition. This latter effort gives rise to neoorthodoxy—or, in politics, to neoconservatism.

But what is the political tradition—the orthodoxy—which neoconservatives wish to renew and revive? It is the political tradition associated with the birth of modern liberal society—a society distinguished from all others by representative government and a predominantly free-market economy. At this point, there is bound to erupt some silly liberal chatter about the "irony" and "paradox" of conservatives wishing to preserve liberal institutions and liberal values. There is nothing more paradoxical about this situation, however, than there is in Lutherans trying to preserve their "reformed" church. Institutions and values, whether it be in religion or politics, are never *created* by orthodoxy-conservatism. That's not their job. Rather, their job is to adapt new institutions and values to the real world—to make them work by reconciling them with prevailing habits of mind and customary behavior. There can be no permanency of success to any such enterprise (just as, on the other hand, there can be no such thing as a permanent revolution). Sooner or later, dissatisfaction sets in, and then the choice is between "making all things new" and a neoconservatism which tries to breathe new life into old forms.

PRACTICALLY all those who are today called neoconservative were originally moved to "make all things new." The collapse of 20th-century socialism as a viable political philosophy was the central ideological experience of their lives. And there was no—is no—liberal alternative, because 20th-century liberalism has, for all sorts of reasons, become a creed that can be fairly described as neosocialism; that is to say, it has become far more interested in equality than in liberty. (There are no liberal parties left in Western Europe, where the choice is between various kinds of socialism and various kinds of conservatism; and most American liberals, if they lived in Britain or Germany or Sweden, would certainly be voting for the social-democratic parties.) Out

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of this dearth of alternatives, American neoconservatism is born.

Neoconservatism believes that conservatism, as it has developed over the past 150 years, has lost its intellectual and spiritual vigor. It needs an infusion of new energies—hence, *neo*conservatism. And, like all such movements, it seeks these energies by a return to the sources. In a sense, the problem that neoconservatism faces is summed up in the fact that Edmund Burke, the founder of traditionalist conservatism, and Adam Smith, the founder of liberal capitalism, were good friends who admired each other's writings. In the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, the original unity of thought which made this possible has become ever more incomprehensible. Conservatism today is fragmented, often self-contradictory, almost always disoriented. Neoconservatism—like neo-orthodoxy in religion—is an effort to rediscover the living trunk beneath all those brittle branches.

A Jewish word, if I may, by way of epilogue. Most American Jews think of themselves as liberals in the political realm. Yet when it comes to Judaism itself, they are practically all neoconservative, not wanting at all to reject or repudiate their religious traditions but rather to give new meaning to them. I do not see how this schizophrenia can last. One cannot indefinitely raise liberal children and expect them to remain members of a neoconservative religious community. What I am, with some presumption, suggesting is that those who care about Jewish survival will find, in the years ahead, that neoconservatism will make a lot more sense to them than the liberalism they now automatically subscribe to.

IRVING KRISTOL, *co-editor of the* Public Interest, *is Henry Luce Professor of Urban Values at New York University and a member of the* Wall Street Journal's *Board of Contributors.*

Lewis H. Lapham: Because the words no longer possess legitimate meanings, it has become impossible to introduce oneself as either a liberal or a conservative. The supporting sophistry requires at least twenty minutes of exposition, and so, in their unqualified state, the words can be assigned only to one's enemies.

Even as insults they have a dulled effect. They have been so often misused that they have lost the overtones still barely present in such words as racist or homosexual. To say that N. is liberal or conservative is to say nothing intelligible about his politics, conduct, profession, residence, or record of prior arrests. It is conceivable, even likely, that a man identified as liberal lives on an unearned income of $150,000 a year, has been indicted on various counts of fraud, and thinks nothing of tapping other people's telephones in the interest of conscience or the state. On the other side of the prejudice it is equally conceivable that a man identified as conservative devotes his life and fortune to the protection of humming birds, writes academic sociology, thinks that the New York *Times* is a good newspaper, and refuses to eat grapes picked by non-union Mexican field hands.

During the last two or three years the people who still use the words have tended to pronounce them with increasingly deliberate inflections of scorn. Perhaps they recognize the loss of meaning and seek to restore it with theatrical diction. They also try to make the words stand as metaphors for an entire wardrobe of subsidiary attitudes about the nature of political and economic theory. The absence of specific meaning presses the words into the service of abstraction, condemning them to the work of representing things as invisible as government, human destiny, and the public interest.

LIKE most words that express prejudice rather than thought, they offer more information about the person who employs them than they do about the people on whom they fall like stones. In common usage this has resulted in the presence of two negative caricatures. Although it has become all but impossible to meet a liberal or a conservative, it has become difficult to avoid the anti-liberal and the anti-conservative. In this sense, as descriptions of social rather than of intellectual phenomena, the words retain a limited currency.

The anti-liberal prides himself on the clarity of his intellect. When talking about the faculty of intelligence (his own or that of his friends and associates) he invariably describes it as "ruthless" or "unrelenting." He believes that he has seen through the veil of the world's illusions, and it comforts him to think himself besieged by fools. In politics, as in literary or business affairs, he disallows all claims of idealism. His wisdom is the wisdom of the insurance investigator who knows that even the most correct paperwork conceals something cynical or self-serving. He talks incessantly about reality and what things cost, about the way in which deluded technocrats persist in confusing the Kingdom of Heaven with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Sooner or later he gets around to saying that there isn't enough money in the world. He can be counted upon to draw the comparison between Tom Wicker and Tartuffe.

The anti-conservative prides himself on the quality of his emotion. He knows a poet who supplies him with high-grade stuff, which he invariably describes as profound. Having aligned himself with the yearning of the human spirit and

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the mechanics of social progress, he believes that he has seen into the depths of the world's desire. It comforts him to think himself oppressed by oil companies, and his wisdom is that of a saloonkeeper. All claims to realism he regards as the conniving of pious scoundrels who mean to preserve the established order at no matter what cost to the poor, the unhappy, and the dispossessed. He talks incessantly about morality and what things mean, about Calvinism made abominable, and Republicans as landlords undeservedly rich and prematurely old. Sooner or later he gets around to saying that there isn't enough love in the world. He can be counted upon to draw the comparison between Orange County and the Weimar Republic.

Given the stupidities of American politics and the inequities of the American economy, both the anti-liberal and the anti-conservative can offer innumerable proofs in support of their prejudice. The front page of every morning's newsaper confirms everybody's worst suspicions. The man who wishes to maintain the pose of intellectual superiority can quote yet another speech from Fred Harris; the man who prefers the pose of moral superiority can point to yet another failure of the antitrust laws. Neither faction puts much faith in the other's facts. The anti-conservative believes that the documents have been falsified or destroyed, the anti-liberal that they have been distorted by their passage through the media conspiracy. The resulting suspicion forces the argument into the realm of first principles. Thus does liberal become synonymous with hypocrite and fool, conservative with villainy and greed. In ordinary conversation the pejorative use of the words implies the further separation between the powers of feeling and reason. The two modes of perception present themselves as adversaries, each of them declaring the other invalid.

This is unfortunate. As words lose the subtlety associated with language they acquire the clumsiness of weapons. Perhaps somebody should declare a moratorium or convene a conference in Finland. If the major journals of political and literary opinion could be persuaded to disarm themselves, or at least to impose limitations on their longer-range columnists, the ensuing spirit of détente might restore confidence in the public conversation.

LEWIS H. LAPHAM *is the editor of* Harper's.

Robert Lekachman: Last spring a pleasant soul from *Newsweek* asked me whether I would object to being identified as a radical economist in the pages of that journal. After the shortest of pauses, I replied that I accepted the label as accurate. Ten years ago *Newsweek* very probably would not have asked the question, and I almost certainly would have answered it differently. Let me seek an explanation of my behavior with the aid of the most reliable of survey-research techniques, introspection.

The pillars of my liberalism circa the mid-60's included moderate confidence in the reforming capacities of enlightened Democratic Presidents and Congresses, exaggerated attachment to Keynesian techniques of economic manipulation, reliance upon sustainable economic growth at generous rates to create enough tax revenues to finance Great Society programs, and faith that, none too soon, racial injustice and financial poverty were about to be exterminated.

WHY then, a decade or so onward, do I embrace radicalism and bid farewell to liberalism? Well, for one thing I agree with politicians like Jerry Brown and Gary Hart and social commentators like Nathan Glazer, James Q. Wilson, Edward Banfield, and Daniel P. Moynihan that the reformist impulse embodied in the Great Society has either failed or achieved far less than its advocates hoped. Liberals and conservatives alike now seem prepared to believe that small is beautiful and smaller expectations of government action and personal achievement are realistic. Distant bureaucracies are bad, self-help is good. Government when it isn't insensitive, corrupt, inefficient, or all three, tends toward the meddlesome and even the repressive. The best of intentions—for example, economic justice for women and blacks—somehow turn into the worst of programs—for example, affirmative-action quotas and court-ordered busing. In sum, the capacity of government to bungle and cause actual harm is usually greater than its ability to do good.

Although much of this fashionable catalogue impresses me as either overstated or plain wrong, particularly the flat adverse judgments on affirmative action and busing, I concur, though for different reasons, in the judgment that the liberal strategies still in vogue are unlikely to attain their aims. I shall call radical the lessons I derive from recent experience. The most important are these: contemporary (and largely justified) demands for group equity are too large to be satisfied at probable rates of future economic growth without substantial redistributions of income and wealth, and such transfers can occur only in the context of serious democratic planning for sustained full employment.

A word first about the growth outlook. One needn't join Robert Heilbroner and the Club of Rome in their glum forecasts of resource exhaustion and inexorable population pressure upon food supplies, to perceive that the global politics of raw materials almost guarantee higher

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prices for energy and minerals in the future. The larger quantities of finished goods and food that Americans must trade for their imports are of course subtractions from the growth dividend available for improvement in living standards. The terms of competition between ourselves and the Soviet Union compel any national administration, however reluctantly, to pay attention to the demands, justified or not, of the Third World for gifts, loans on concessionary terms, and commodity agreements which translate into higher prices for consuming countries and implicit redistribution of resources from them to developing societies, via altered terms of trade in favor of the producers.

WITHIN the United States, women, blacks, Hispanics, and Michael Novak's beloved unmeltable ethnics all clamor for their share of opportunity for elite education, attractive employment, and rapid promotion. At the least, these groups demand equality of opportunity and at most, equality of result. If one agrees with Adam Smith in this bicentennial year of *The Wealth of Nations* that "the difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom, and education," then resolute pursuit of equality of opportunity is likely in the end to generate that equality of condition which Tocqueville stressed as the "fundamental fact from which all others seem to be derived." This "principle of equality" was nothing less than a "providential fact" for it was "universal," "lasting," and no less than "an irresistible revolution which has advanced for centuries in spite of every obstacle."

As the current inadequate recovery from the 1974-75 mini-depression demonstrates, conventional policies of economic adjustment insure that minimal advances for women and minorities can be gratified, if at all, only at excessive social cost. When unemployment hangs high, women and blacks can be hired or promoted only by failing to hire or actually firing men or whites. As Rudolf Klein in a somewhat different context has well put the matter, "One man's prize is another man's loss." In the absence of full employment, affirmative action is truly a "zero-sum game," again in Klein's words.

Now the uncomfortable fact is this. A very few brief episodes aside, this country has experienced full employment since 1929 only during wartime. Slower average rates of growth in the future almost guarantee that unacceptably high average rates of post-World War II unemployment will rise and accentuate existing maldistribution of income and wealth, unless a good deal more is done by way of public intervention than the inadequate combination of fiscal and monetary responses that represent the expiration of Keynesian doctrine. The measures needed, among them direct public job creation, credit and capital allocation, mandatory price controls and wage guidelines, national health insurance, and public construction, conveniently fit under the rubric of democratic planning, preferably on the Swedish rather than the French model. No panacea, planning is in the American context still "radical," opposed by most mainstream economists as well as the bulk of the business community.

The link between full employment and movement toward less inegalitarian income and wealth distribution is strong, for full employment is bound to restructure labor markets by sharply raising rewards for unpleasant, dangerous, and tedious labor, compelling employers to redesign these jobs in the direction of variety and challenge, and raising the long-run share of income from work at the expense of income from property. Price controls and anti-inflationary tax policies will contribute to the same result.

In other words, in the 70's and later, familiar liberal objectives, notably equality of opportunity and full employment, can be approximated only after substantial structural alterations in the relation between public and private economic activity. Liberals accordingly can either trim their goals because their attainment involves changes they deplore, or they can persevere by advocating means which imply radical change.

I SUPPOSE that I call myself then a moderate radical much as Nathan Glazer once termed himself a moderate conservative. For it is important to the consumers of political ideas, the voters, that ideological labels describe the policies of their wearers at least as accurately as the labels on supermarket products identify the ingredients of the packages to which they are affixed. It may be that the time has come to retire honorably the word liberal and continue the debate as a dialogue between radicals and conservatives.

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Max Lerner: Dear Editor: What do you want to do? Put the whole lot of us—political reporters, commentators, politicians—out of business? Starve conversation at cocktail parties and reduce it to dry sense? Abolish political gossip? Make us give up labels and examine the thing itself? Smash the old molds and force the language into a freshness that will make us all work harder?

Obviously this is unconstitutional, being cruel and unusual punishment. Just as obviously it cries out to be done. On your question about whether the terms—liberal, conservative, Left, Right—have

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lost their usefulness the answer has to be, Yes, pretty much. But not for the reasons you suggest—that they have shifted meaning, and that once liberal positions are now conservative, and vice versa.

It has always been thus. Consider that Jefferson's once liberal states'-rights doctrine became a standby for Southern conservatives, and that Hamilton's once conservative doctrine of national centralism (big government, we now call it) became the bogey of conservatives and the sweetheart of the liberals. This isn't a matter for surprise. It is the stuff out of which the history of ideas is woven. You can't step twice into the same stream of intellectual history. Over a span of years the angles of political vision—for that is what liberal, conservative, Left, Right amount to—are bound to have a changing content. They are ways of perceiving the political and social reality, but if the reality does somersaults so will the perception of it.

THE trouble lies not in the changes of content, but in the fuzziness, subjectivism, and emotionalism of thinking, sometimes approaching downright dishonesty, behind the terms. This has worn them away, and reduced their usefulness as intellectual currency.

Let me quote from Jimmy Carter, talking to reporters on his triumphant trip home from the Democratic convention which nominated him for the Presidency. Referring to his acceptance speech he said, "I think the speech, not inadvertently, shifted back and forth between liberal and conservative." Then he added, "But I think it was uniformly populist in tone." Did he consider himself a populist, a reporter asked. "I think so." How then did he define populism? Here was the answer from the man who will probably be President of the U.S. for four or even eight years. "I'll let you define it. How do you define liberalism? How do you define compassion, understanding, and compatibility? They are different words that anyone could define."

This would have been a wonderful illustrative passage for George Orwell's great essay on langauge and politics. I am not certain whether Carter meant that populism, liberalism, truth, honesty, love, and the rest are too hard or too easy of definition to merit a try by himself. Probably too easy ("They are different words that anyone could define"). But whichever he meant, what counts is his merging of two political concepts—populism and liberalism—with the vast universals like truth, honesty, love, and compassion, as so self-evident that they require no precision of analysis but lend themselves to ready definition by the common experience. Like many other politicians—and even some writers and professors—Carter used these terms not as instruments of thought but as substitutes for thought.

I pick Carter to quote because the papers with his remarks are handy, because he has been rather expansive about his views, and because he seems—by his mind and training—a cut above most of his fellow politicians. This is what makes his use of the terms dismaying. Orwell, quoting from Harold Laski, Lancelot Hogben, and a Communist pamphleteer, was equally dismayed in his own day. He didn't conclude that we should abandon the use of terms like Left and Right, liberal and conservative and radical. He did say that we should give up using them too easily and sloppily as substitutes for thought and stimulants for emotion, and that we should walk warily around them (and indeed around all political language) before we use them.

If we gave up the worn and hackneyed terms, and embraced others in their place, they would soon become worn and hackneyed too. They are short-cuts to indicate political directions, and so we make them part of our long quarrel about what direction to take. Left and Right are even more explicit signals for direction, which have somehow become mixed up with the belief systems of Russia and China on one side and America on the other. More recently, liberal, conservative, and radical have become code words for attitudes about the pace of social change—rapid, slow, and fundamental, in that order, although "fundamental" has itself become a code word for a revolutionary and probably Marxist changeover of the society.

The worst aspect of what has happened is the impoverishment of language when we need to use it for description and analysis. It is a little like the use of expletives and obscenities: their number is limited and their range is narrow. When you have said Left, Right, and perhaps Center, you have used up your resources. This is true also when you have said liberal, radical, and conservative, although one could add moderate, progressive, reactionary, populist.

IN SOME recent debates, where I have been cast as a "liberal" against a "conservative" opponent, I have made a plea for an understanding of the ambiguities of each term and—given recent social changes—of their overlapping meaning. What counts for me is less whether a person calls himself one or the other than what the quality of his thinking and feeling is. The William James distinction between the tough-minded and the tender-minded, in the sense of recognition or blurring of the reality principle, strikes me as more important than the mooted questions of position and direction. I discern some signs of the emergence of a tough-minded liberalism which is more wary of catch words than the reflexive and conventional brand of liberalism, more willing to own up to blunders of the past, more skeptical of political fanaticisms and self-deceptions, more candid about the wastes and inefficiencies of government action, more sensitive to the complexities of society and the ironies of history. I suspect

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that this kind of liberalism will soon have its day, in America and elsewhere. I should just as soon keep the term, with the content changed, for it is the content that counts.

MAX LERNER, *whose works include* America as a Civilization *and* Unfinished Country, *is a syndicated political columnist.*

Carey McWilliams: As political labels liberal and conservative have lost much of the limited meaning they once possessed. A major reason—there are others—can be found in liberal-conservative complicity in ill-conceived cold-war strategies. The underlying assumptions of containment and anti-Communism have been shared, with only minor variations in emphasis, by both major parties and by their liberal-conservative factions. Debate, when there has been any, has usually centered on whether, how, and to what extent cold-war strategies should be escalated. Before World War II had ended, the liberal Truman, ignoring top-level military advice, decided to drop the bomb on Hiroshima, not to knock Japan out of the war but as a warning to the Russians. Later he pushed aside the unanimous recommendations of a panel of distinguished science advisers, and ordered construction and testing of the H-bomb, thereby locking the two great powers into a system cheerfully described as mutual assured destruction. The rhetoric and ideology of anti-fascism was a factor in sweeping many liberals into the cold-war camp; to them the Soviet dictatorship presented essentially the same problem as the Nazi and required a similar response even though the Russians had been our allies in World War II. A subsidiary motivation was the self-serving desire of many liberals to avoid the charge of being "soft on Communism." Under Kennedy and Johnson, escalation of the war in Vietnam was largely in the hands of the liberal elite: "the best and brightest." It was not until the middle 60's that a few liberals—Wayne Morse, Ernest Gruening, Eugene McCarthy, and George McGovern—began to speak out against the war. On the other hand, conservatives were cold warriors from conviction and, also, for tactical reasons. They made good use of Joe McCarthy to attack liberal Democrats and, in the process, managed to heat up the cold war. To be sure, Eisenhower had some of the instincts of an old-fashioned conservative but unfortunately he permitted John Foster Dulles to call the shots.

Viewed in retrospect, the cold-war strategies of the last thirty years—from August 6, 1945 when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima until April 29, 1975 when the last U.S. troops were withdrawn from Vietnam—have had distressing consequences for liberals and conservatives which neither faction is willing to acknowledge. This country emerged from World War II the dominant military and economic power in the world. Electing to cope with the Soviet threat by largely military means, we acquired hundreds of bases overseas, entered into ill-conceived alliances and pacts, supported corrupt and repressive regimes as long as they voiced anti-Communist sentiments, intervened repeatedly in the internal affairs of other nations, encouraged a worldwide expansion of American industry in search of markets and raw materials, spent uncounted billions on overseas aid, with the lion's share for military purposes, and ended up lowering American prestige and compromising American ideals. Today, thirty years later, do we feel more secure militarily than we did in 1945? Have we in fact "contained" Communism? Have we strengthened capitalism? On these issues, the cold-war liberals, usually so voluble, are today strangely silent, even a bit abashed, while the conservatives (excluding the neoconservatives and the Reagan Right) exhibit, perhaps for somewhat different reasons, a similar disenchantment with the "achievements" of cold-war strategies they jointly sponsored with the liberals. The conservatives now find themselves outflanked on the Right by a movement that may capture control of the Republican party. And the liberals are aware of the existence of a large potential radical constituency on the Left—silent, distrustful (of them), largely invisible and inactive at the moment—that is likely to emerge as a real force in the future.

BOTH liberals and conservatives also joined in the domestic witch hunt which drove the Left-pacifist-radical opposition to cold-war strategies from the political scene after 1948. A minority of dissenting liberals was part of this opposition which was never wholly silenced. The witch hunt was set in motion by Truman, with the Smith Act prosecutions, loyalty-security programs, clearance systems, blacklists, and, worst of all, a series of disastrous decisions for which Truman-appointees to the Vinson Court were largely responsible. The Warren Court was a distinct improvement but more by accident than design; Eisenhower is said to have regarded Warren's appointment as his worst mistake. In the depth of the cold war, Erwin N. Griswold tried to remind his fellow conservatives that the privilege against self-incrimination is "one of the great landmarks in man's struggle to make himself civilized," but the heirs of Charles Evans Hughes, Harlan Fiske Stone, and Henry L. Stimson weren't listening. However, once the Nixon Mafia found itself the target of criminal investigations, it became fashionable for conservative politicans, officeholders, and business executives to plead the Fifth. Under both liberal Democrats—Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson—and conservative Republicans—Eisenhower and Nixon—World War II emergency measures were retained

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and strengthened, thereby setting the stage for the imperial Presidency, nor were checks imposed on the dirty-tricks inclinations of the FBI and the CIA. Any measures proposed in the name of anti-Communism were permissible.

Over a period of time increasingly heavy cold-war military expenditures necessarily began to impose limitations on the number, scope, and character of new domestic social programs that could be properly funded. Guns-and-butter combined fairly well at the outset: welfare liberalism continued to receive, for quite a time, a growing share of the budget. This was the period when much was said and written about ours being an affluent society. But as the defense budget increased with the escalation of the war in Vietnam, the economy became distorted, productivity declined in the civilian sector, deficits increased, and inflation became a serious problem. And then to quiet the opposition to the Vietnam war, Johnson launched the Great Society with much fanfare, declared war on poverty, and began to shower money on the universities and a variety of social programs many of which were hastily conceived and wretchedly administered. But the tactic boomeranged; if anything this spending spree actually stimulated both civil-rights marches and anti-war protests. In the wake of World War II, there had been some reason to believe that race might emerge as a major issue in national politics for the first time since Reconstruction, but the onset of the cold war shelved civil-rights issues for a decade. Only with the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955 did the movement begin to gather momentum. In a relatively brief period some significant gains were in fact achieved, but once Nixon was elected in 1968 and reelected in 1972 both liberals and conservatives began to beat a retreat on the issue; "benign neglect" became and has pretty much remained the new tactic.

In the aftermath of Watergate and Vietnam, the easy funding of social programs has come to an end. Today liberals are proposing very little—they are aware of the strength of anti-government sentiment—and do not know where to find funding for programs already on the books. Unemployment is still high and inflation has not subsided; neither liberals nor conservatives are prepared to advocate an incomes policy. Both factions—and both major parties—still strongly support increased military spending as a prop for the economy. Conservatives, like liberals, now accept deficit financing as inevitable and the deficits steadily increase. And while both factions make noises about deregulating natural gas, airlines, and other regulated industries, neither is serious about these proposals which big business does not approve.

At the moment, therefore, we seem to be between generations and between eras. *Der Stern* has called the period from 1945 to April 29, 1975, "The America Era." Call it what you will, the period of the thirty-year cold war is coming to an end; rapid social and cultural changes have brought new realities to the surface which cannot be ignored much longer. No more than the conservatives do the liberals know how to cope with these realities. Neither has proposed a viable post-Vietnam foreign policy, although Kissinger has recently—if belatedly—made a few cautious moves in new directions. Until a new foreign policy is formulated and accepted—one that places less emphasis on military considerations—it is difficult to see how significant new domestic programs can be projected. Neither liberals nor conservatives are anxious to explore the real meaning of Watergate and the disaster in Vietnam or to face the implications of their long complicity in cold-war strategies. Both now seek to preempt the Center position. But the emerging movements on the flanks, Right and Left, are ideological and hence foreshadow basic realignments.

Actually the differences between liberals and conservatives have always been more a matter of temperament and style, background and position, than of ideology. Over long reaches of our political history, as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., noted, liberal regimes alternated with conservative ones at something like fifteen-year intervals, rather like Max Planck's description of the alternation in science history between periods of great ferment and breakthrough followed by periods of testing and application. With us, liberal and conservative have been the heads and the tails of a single political coin; as labels they have suggested different if vaguely defined attitudes toward change, progress, and problem-solving. Ambrose Bierce once summed up the liberal-conservative difference this way: "The conservative is a statesman who is enamored of existing evils, as distinguished from the liberal who wishes to replace them with others."

Historically the two-party system, with its liberal-conservative tensions in each party, provided all the ideological support capitalism required in its expansionist phase since it maintained the illusion of popular sovereignty by offering what seemed to be—and sometimes were—fairly significant options on both foreign and domestic issues. But today the Republican party, dominated organizationally by the conservative Right, is so sharply divided that its capacity to govern is debatable, and, as usual, it is short on ideas. The Democrats, less sharply divided than in the past, but overcommitted and defensive, are moving toward the Center. In such a setting and with monopoly capitalism in the throes of a developing crisis of major proportions, the liberal and conservative labels mean very little.

Carey McWilliams *was for many years the editor of the* Nation.

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Robert Manning: In a time when society, or at least a part of it, has taken Marshall McLuhan seriously, it must be remembered that McLuhan argues that clarity of expression demonstrates an absence of thought —or something to that effect. Taking McLuhan at his word (you may if you care to, I won't), it is possible to conclude that the imprecision with which labels are applied today, words like liberal and conservative or Right and Left, implies a prevalence of thought. That is of course not true. The reason for the imprecision is not that the meanings of the words have necessarily changed, but that the situations to which they are meant to apply have changed.

We keep using the words reflexively, which is an unimaginative and lazy habit, but we also use them instinctively, which is not necessarily a bad habit. Ten or more years ago, for example, it was difficult to imagine that men and women of the New York or Eastern seaboard intellectual moderate Left (see how difficult it is to be precise?) would in a short time be found to be advising the likes of Richard Nixon or taking out New York *Times* advertisements urging his election, and would find themselves being described as conservatives or, to be more precise, neoconservatives. Yet that is just (precisely?) what has happened to those who might be described with benign frivolity as the Kristol Palace Guard. People who disagree with them, and even some who do not, apply the conservative or Right label to men and women who consider themselves to be liberal in the classical sense of the word because they *feel* that these citizens have indeed crossed some divide, that they have become more interested in their later, maturer lives in preserving and tending good crops than in ploughing new furrows. There is nothing at all wrong with such a crossing, but there is nothing wrong either with those who choose to see the crossing as a journey into conservatism. Perhaps there are better words: preservators? cautionaries?

I FIND no puzzle in the fact that opposition to quota systems as they were used for many decades to limit, say, the numbers of Jews in colleges or professional schools was considered to be a liberal posture while opposition today to quotas for the admission of, say, blacks is considered to be a conservative position. Those labels are as valid as any substitutes that might be suggested. We are contemplating two very different situations. In the first case, the practice was aimed at denying places, for very uncommendable reasons, to eminently qualified applicants. In today's case, the intent is to provide places for members of a deprived and long discriminated-against minority even if qualification standards are not always met. This "quota system" is based on a liberal assumption that given the opportunity a meaningful number of those admitted will prove capable of rising to the opportunity. And if that assumption is liberal then it seems perfectly straightforward to say that opposition to that proposition is conservative, whatever the profounder issues at stake.

I suppose it does matter, though, how these items are used, and those who can guide us to less lazy, more precise modes of speech will do a service to us all. Perhaps a part of the answer lies in a more energetic search for just the right words for the right occasion. Franklin Roosevelt didn't pussyfoot around with conservative or right wing when he wanted to spindle his man, but called him an economic royalist. Winston Churchill made his point quite nicely when, noting Aneurin Bevan's pleasure at dining frequently with Lord Beaverbrook and sipping Beaverbrook's champagne, he dubbed Bevan a "Bollinger Bolshevik." For want of such imaginative polemicists, we find ourselves employing once-useful words as pejoratives rather than as simple labels. Bring back Harold Ickes.

ROBERT MANNING *is editor in chief of the* Atlantic Monthly.

Martin Mayer: It is hard to imagine anyone so perverse that he would feel (or confess) satisfaction with the current use of the terms conservative and liberal or Left and Right; but at least part of everybody's distaste for these words results from the attempt to give them more content than they can possibly hold. I am not sure they were ever of much use.

Left and Right are inherently meaningless, there being no reason why the more revolutionary parties of late 18th-century France chose to seat themselves to one side rather than the other side of the meeting room. Fashion regards the Left as dissatisfied with things as they are and the Right as more generally content, but a look at the Reagan campaign (not to mention the careers of Hitler, Mussolini, and Peron) should disabuse anyone of the notion that this fashion expresses a truth. Nor can the two "sides" be distinguished by their attitude toward state power: the Right is normally willing to leave individuals with apparent means to resist the state, on the understanding that nothing of the sort will ever be contemplated; the Left prefers to see all resources under state control; in practice the difference turns out to be trivial. Americans are fortunate that except in the parlor games of intellectuals and academics the terms Left and Right are used almost exclusively as pejoratives.

Liberal and conservative, of course, do have significant etymologies and meanings, though neither escapes ambiguity. Liberal necessarily relates to freedom, as the advocates of liberal arts

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insist, but it also means generous. The root conserve can mean either keep or economize. On the generous/economize continuum, the terms are indeed contradictory, but not on the other plane: obviously, one may wish to keep freedoms. Historically, the liberal preferred a weaker rather than a stronger government, while the conservative hoped for state power sufficient to keep everybody in line. This distinction has now eroded, though vestiges survive along the abortion-pornography-marijuana axis that actually informs popular as distinct from specialist uses of terms like liberal.

On some issues, the emotional connotations of these two terms are indeed a guide to attitudes: law-and-order is undoubtedly a conservative cause, and welfare is a liberal cause. But individuals may without strain hold conservative positions on some questions and liberal positions on others: Harlem overwhelmingly wants both safe streets and more generous welfare provisions. Sometimes, the labels are deliberately confusing: by substituting the neologism ecology for the crusade our grandfathers called conservation, the Pied Pipers of this movement have given it a liberal marching song—though environmental protection is obviously a profoundly conservative cause.

POLITICS plays so small a role in the lives of ordinary people—and so large a role in the imaginations of its devotees—that swings in the meaning of propaganda labels are predictable functions of time and place. Civil liberties is a Left issue in Chile, a Right issue in the Soviet Union; states' rights were a liberal cause for Holmes and Brandeis, a conservative cause for Landon and Taft; strong Presidencies were progressive when the President was Kennedy, reactionary when he was Nixon.

What is new and a little strange today is the utter distrust of popular opinion that has grown up among people who describe themselves as liberals or Left and who waste so much of their own and others' time in denunciations of elitism. Marx found it necessary to posit a lumpenproletariat too dumb to adopt the tenets of socialism, but that lumpenproletariat was never conceived of as an actual majority of the workers. European socialists a generation ago used to say that "I cannot be in the right with the people against me"; and while the humility thus advertised was not always genuine, its expression was important to the self-image of the self-labeled leftist. The fact that this self-image is now anti-democratic reflects a failure that has been internalized rather than recognized.

The root of today's discontent with words like Left or conservative is that the real world has been changing (though not so rapidly as is sometimes said), while socioeconomic ideology has remained relatively stable for a generation and political ideology has been frozen stiff. On stage in New York right now is a performance of the *Threepenny Opera*, in which a moment's preliminary hush dramatizes Brecht's sophomoric query as to whether there is any difference between killing a man and hiring a man. Even in Brecht's time it was probably obvious that the difference for the fellow's wife and family was considerable; but now the line has no political meaning at all, because everybody—really everybody—knows that from the worker's point of view there is no difference whatever between being hired by a state-owned enterprise and being hired by a privately-owned enterprise. The British coal miner seems to be the unhappiest worker in the Western world, though he truly works for his society (and is subsidized by it, for under British socialism it has become much cheaper to bring coal to Newcastle). However one defines the word (forgetting it would be wiser than defining it), alienation was not caused by and cannot be cured by politics.

All over the Western world, people want an end to "remote" central government, no more taxes, no more high-rise housing, no more increases in food prices. Where the government is on the Right, these are left-wing demands; where it is on the Left, they are right-wing demands. Politics *per se* is the opiate of the half-educated (this is why it so bemuses college students); very few questions for decision in the modern world are clarified by giving the disputants political labels. The Brownian motion of these labels about the great gasbag of political discussion should be a source of amusement rather than anguish to serious people.

MARTIN MAYER *is the author of* The Lawyers, Wall Street: Men and Money, The Schools, The Bankers, *and, most recently,* Today and Tomorrow in America.

Richard John Neuhaus: Yes, it matters very much how terms such as liberal and conservative are used. Not because these particular terms are sacred—although they do bear an enormous part of Western political history—but because differences and the labels that signal differences should not be fudged in a democratic society. What liberal means and what conservative means have been the subject of debate and dramatic change for at least 150 years in French, English, German, and American public discourse. The definitions will not be settled any time soon, and that is good. They *cannot* be settled any time soon because too many conflicting viewpoints lay claim to such venerable terminology in their search for legitimacy. (The flummery of 1884 populists and 1976 McGovernites resorting to "progressive," notwithstanding.) The definitions *should* not be settled any time soon because the alternative to the continuing definitional contest would be either a dangerously

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hardened polarization of ideologies, or a putative transcendence of differences in which government by consensus disguises the seizure of power by one party.

Admittedly, ours is a particularly confusing and sometimes painful moment in the continuing debate over definitions. It is not enough, when asked whether one is liberal or conservative, to answer, "On what issue?" That answer assumes the conventional—now conventionally unreflective and incoherent—alignment of issues in the liberal and conservative columns. Thus pro-abortion is liberal, pro-economic growth is conservative, and so forth. Picking and choosing issues at random from the shelves of the political supermarket may give the appearance of being independent, but in fact it reflects captivity to the way the management has arranged the goods. It inhibits organized action, which is to say, it inhibits effective political contest.

In search of a more coherent approach one might trace the convoluted debate through such major referents as Locke, Rousseau, Jefferson, Burke, Humboldt, Trilling, and Oakeshott. That is a useful thing to do, and no doubt others in this symposium will do it. I choose in this instance a more autobiographical mode, in the confidence that my perplexities and discoveries are not all that unique.

BORN into a family that was largely apolitical, although intuitively conservative, I came to political awareness, so to speak, at a time when the culture managers presented for my choosing Joe McCarthy and Adlai Stevenson. The choice was easy and the meaning of liberal was clear. Liberal meant enlightenment (with a small e), progress, generosity, and, above all, compassion. Liberal was pretty much a synonym for good guy, as I understood goodness. Ignorant then of enlightenment's propensity toward capitalizing itself, I saw no conflict with my theological posture or religious commitment. Indeed, the convergence was exceedingly smooth. I shared (and share) with the religiously liberal disposition a belief that religion should be pertinent to culture, a belief that God is immanent in history, and a belief that history is purposive, moving—on however horrendously erratic a course—toward the kingdom of God.

By the early 60's, with my involvement in civil-rights and inner-city work, and later in the anti-war movement, I was not uneasy about being called a radical. Radical, like liberal before that, was more a matter of disposition than of doctrine. Radical denoted urgency about being liberal, about being enlightened and compassionate. I was in and out of jails, supporting draft resistance, picketing for community control of schools—all in the quiet confidence that such radicalism was but liberalism with nerve. Not until 1966 and then, more pressingly, by the Chicago convention of 1968 did I feel the need to distinguish myself from other radicalisms that constituted the "Movement." Pop Marxism, unreflective hostility to the American experiment, and the counterculture's grab-bag of liberationisms all strained severely one's relationship to what had seemed to be a more or less cohesive movement for peace and justice. Clearly there was a sharp break from the enlightenment and compassion of intensified liberalism. Radicalization, as it was called, was no longer liberalism with nerve but liberalism abandoned. The value of enlightenment was abandoned in the counterculture's obeisance to anti-intellectualism and glorified irrationality; compassion was abandoned in its preoccupation with the discontents of the privileged rather than the needs of the poor. *Movement and Revolution,* written with Peter Berger in 1969, was my effort (Berger then and now calls himself a conservative) to redeem the term radical for the service of liberalism.

As futile as that effort seems to have been, and despite the fact that today I select some items labeled conservative in our misarranged political supermarket, I am not ready to surrender radicalism altogether to the mindless. For myself, as for millions of Americans, political attitude is inseparable from religious belief. The Jewish-Christian belief in the messianic age, the coming kingdom, is inescapably radical. It radically relativizes the political process itself, and most particularly it relativizes the state. It provides a transcendent point of reference which, in accord with the most elementary biblical prohibition of idolatry, keeps every political structure under judgment ("one nation *under* God"), reminding the state that it is not God. That messianic vision relativizes both what politics can claim for itself, and what we can expect from politics. Here, surprisingly to some, radicals and conservatives meet.

In the radical view, the relativizing of the political process and the state makes possible, at times mandatory, conscientious disobedience. In the conservative view, that same relativizing means limited expectations from politics; state activity cannot heal all human woes short of the kingdom of God. Thus it becomes apparent why both radicalism and conservatism are supported by the same biblical tradition. The mistake made by many radicals of a revolutionary bent is to believe that the present order can be replaced with another that can command near absolute loyalty. The mistake made by many conservatives of a reactionary bent is to believe that near absolute loyalty to the present order is our only shield against impending chaos. Both mistakes constitute a betrayal of the messianic hope.

AGREED as they are on the relativizing of the present order, it might be thought that the difference between conservative and radical is largely over the fragility of the world, the radical being ready to take greater risks. But there is a more elementary difference in the reading of reality. In con-

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tradiction to the messianic vision, much conservatism looks to the past as the legitimating center of reality. Ironically, this puts conservatism into bed with Rousseau and his ilk who fantasize about the restoration of an original state of nature. To change the metaphor, major streams of conservatism and liberalism flow together. On the other hand, the radicalism I am describing looks to the future for legitimation or, more precisely, for historical vindication. Formed in compassionate response to the wretched of the earth (the biblical *anavim*) such radicalism truly believes that the poor shall inherit the earth. *In*formed by historical experience, such radicalism is unremittingly opposed to those who, in the name of other radicalisms, confuse their plans with the kingdom of God, for it knows that such revolutions merely redistribute and often increase human suffering. Yet such radicalism challenges any present order at the points where that order resists the promised future. The challenge may, reluctantly and as a last resort, be carried to the point of revolution, but it will never confuse that revolutionary new order with the Absolute Future. And this brings us, by what some may think a circuitous route, to radicalism's commitment to democratic liberalism.

The radicalism engendered by the Jewish-Christian tradition posits a *covenant* with the Absolute Future. Liberalism at its best posits a *contract* in the provisional present. As I argue in detail in *Time Toward Home: The American Experiment as Revelation,* the vitality of our society depends upon a livelier interaction between historical covenant and social contract. As a biblical radical I am committed to liberalism (and its political incarnation in constitutional democracy) because, so far in human experience, only liberalism has sustained the contract whereby free discussion and challenge are possible, thus keeping all present structures open to the promised future. This, I contend, is a much firmer foundation for commitment to liberalism than are the secular myths of Nature and Reason which emerged from the Enlightenment. Those myths are increasingly implausible to many secularists, and they are unrelated to, even hostile to, the most deeply held (i.e., religious) beliefs of most of the American people. If the future of liberalism and its defense of freedom depend upon sustaining the militantly secularist myths of the Enlightenment, the prospect is not promising.

The approach suggested here, all too briefly to be sure, clearly comes down on the Lockean rather than the *étatiste* side of the liberal tradition, in favor of a limited state interacting with many other institutional players in the public realm. Although others take the approach in different directions, it leads me to support economic growth against the ecohysterics' fear of risk, to oppose capital punishment and affirm society's obligation to protect human life, whether aged, crippled, or unborn (remember the *anavim*), to favor a more natural interaction between religion and public life, against the present sterile, abstract, and conceptually confused dogmas of church/state separationism, and to take other positions which are variously labeled liberal, radical, and conservative, in our presently disordered discourse.

As to the upcoming presidential election, between Ford and Reagan the Republicans had to choose between vastly different degrees of cleverness and competence in defense of the *ancien régime*. Jimmy Carter, on the other hand, appears to be Lockeanism with a sense of historical covenant. That is a winsome and, I strongly hope, a winning combination.

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Robert Nisbet: Continuing ambiguities notwithstanding, the words liberal and conservative are indispensable; they tell us more about an individual's political philosophy than do the party labels Democrat and Republican. It is history, not the dictionary, that gives political and ideological words their meanings. Think only of the French Radical Socialist party—neither radical nor socialist. Whatever may be the historic meanings of liberal and conservative, whatever may still be academically squeezed from their etymologies, the fact is, events of this century have given both words reasonably concrete significance and genuine relevance to the major issues of government and society. To be a liberal today means that one is overwhelmingly committed to the uses of political power in economy and social order for purposes of planning, regulation, and control. To be a conservative means that one is much more interested in protection of economy and social order from invasions of political power for such purposes.

In very considerable degree conservatism, as it has evolved intellectually during the last three decades, is compounded of the principles which were the mainstays of classical liberalism, the liberalism stretching from Montesquieu and Adam Smith through Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill, down to such American minds as William Graham Sumner, Mr. Justice Holmes, and Albert Jay Nock. No doubt it would be pleasant for many of us if the word liberal could be taken from contemporary liberals and old meanings of freedom instilled once again into it. Conservative still does not sit well with some of the minds to which the label is commonly applied. The "conservative" economists Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman declare themselves—and with much historical warrant—liberals, not

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conservatives. It is interesting to recall that Herbert Hoover, castigated so widely in the 30's as a conservative, even reactionary, stoutly defended his right to the word liberal.

BUT, to repeat, history alone gives political meanings to words, and nothing is more evident than the transformation during this century of the meaning of liberalism in America. The transformation began with Wilson's New Freedom, reinforced by social and economic policies basic to Wilson's war society of 1917-18, and continued through the New Deal, Truman's government, Kennedy's New Frontier, and Johnson's Great Society down to the ideas and values which animate the Udalls and Humphreys today. Say all we wish about the corruption of the word, liberal clearly stands today for political interventionism and, increasingly, egalitarianism. To see the national government's power as the ideal means of effecting major changes in economy, social order, and culture, of planning for, managing, and controlling all of our major social institutions—this, I think it is evident, is and has been for a half-century the very essence of American liberal thought. Increasingly, the concept of equality has become converted from its historic meaning of equal legal opportunity to what is now commonly called equality of condition or result. Redistribution will prove almost certainly to become the major domestic ideal of liberalism, as we know it today. I would say that, present trends continuing, there will be little difference in a decade between American liberalism and the British Labour party.

Hence the slow but continuing rise of an identifiable conservatism among a minority of intellectuals in this country as well as among substantial segments of the population at large. As noted above, this conservatism is the legatee of classical liberalism. It is compounded of the ideas or ideals of decentralization of government, regionalism and localism, the integrity of the economy and of the social order, and respect for the rights of neighborhood, local community, and voluntary association, as well as the rights of individuals. Liberty—of individual, group, and locality—is the basic value of this conservatism. There are sure to be those who will say that such ideas and values are not conservative at all, but liberal. I can only say that when I was writing my *Quest for Community* a quarter of a century ago, I too thought these ideas liberal. But the book was immediately identified—to the degree that it was recognized at all—as not a liberal but a conservative book. My own experience seems to me to epitomize the history of recent decades. Conservatives, however libertarian their principles so far as big government is concerned, are not likely to wrest the word liberal away from the followers of FDR, Kennedy, and Johnson.

On the other hand, it is by no means certain they would want to. Was it merely amusing or a significant sign of the times when the liberal Congressman Udall asked to be characterized as a progressive rather than a liberal during the primaries? Governor Jerry Brown, no matter what course he may now be on, won national recognition by virtue of observations made from his Zen-pad which, whatever their real meaning, if any, had no evident affinity with liberal rhetoric. What is most striking, though, is the fact that all three pre-convention candidates for President, Carter, Ford, and Reagan, were essentially conservative. Yes, Carter! I recognize that, having won out over liberal Democratic rivals, Carter has been wooed by liberals of the media, the entertainment world, the foundations and universities. He will look rather different when he enters the White House from what he did going into the New Hampshire primary. The power of the liberal voice is mighty!

Even so, the outlook for conservatism seems to me good. Its inheritance of the classical-liberal position on centralized power, on bureaucracy, on freedom over egalitarianism, and the rights of individuals and of the smaller unities in the state will, I think, insure its acceptance by an increasing number of Americans. Liberals seemingly learn nothing and forget nothing, as is evidenced by the legislative monstrosity known as the Humphrey-Hawkins bill, spurned even by economists ordinarily friendly to the liberal cause. Whatever the benign intentions of liberals, their penchant for politicizing and collectivizing, their preference for the public sphere over the private in economic matters, their love of centralization of administration, and their ineradicable fondness for the egalitarian and the inflationary, all of this has become too well known for indefinite success. For several decades now, liberals have relegated such values as decentralization, states' rights, localism, and individual, voluntary action to the dustbin of history. Conservatives have known better. It has taken quite a while, but by now popular opposition to the liberals' Leviathan is substantial, and I don't think, short of severe crisis or catastrophe, that this opposition will diminish. I still wish, though, that we could retrieve the noble word, *liberal.*

ROBERT NISBET *is Albert Schweitzer Professor of Humanities at Columbia University. His books include* The Sociological Tradition, Social Change and History, The Quest for Community, *and* Twilight of Authority.

Michael Novak: James Baldwin once remarked that American blacks would be a means of "saving the soul" of white America. Language about "saving the soul" is never particularly convincing, not about indivi-

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duals, and certainly not about social groups like nations, churches, or races. An ancient injunction says: "Count no man saved until fifteen minutes dead."

Still, Baldwin's words, and those of many white liberals before and after him, have had a certain mischievous effect. Few things have so corrupted the meaning of liberalism in the United States as the white ideology for the "black revolution" of the 60's. Insofar as the recent decade brought greater income, status, education, visibility, power, and opportunity to millions of individual black Americans, its achievements reflect the responsiveness of the pragmatic American system. And yet the ideology in which that revolution has been expressed has steadily undermined the public understanding of liberalism. A new passion of race and blood has injured liberalism, both in domestic affairs and in respect to Third World nations.

The word racist now functions as did the word pink in the 50's: the whip across the face used by demagogues; the slap meant to cripple careers and to dry up sources of scholarly funding; the occasion for disruptions of free speech; and the broad brush of derogation and character assassination. It is a word requiring no specific violation, involving no clear content, a word promoting loose accusations against personality and even alleged unconscious attitudes. It may be, and often is, applied for no offense greater than disagreement.

It is a fine point, why liberals have allowed themselves to be mau-maued by this term—indeed, why some forged and canonized its usage. Psychological analysis may be relevant. Here I confine myself to a description of the logic.

THERE are seven polarities that give rise to the contrast between liberalism and conservatism, Left and Right. On each of them the impact of a faulty ideology concerning blacks in America has had a corrupting effect in national discourse.

1. *Capitalist vs. socialist.* Some liberals are socialists and some are capitalists. But Left tends to imply support for socialist analysis and forms of government, as Right tends to imply support for capitalist. Since most working economies are mixed, this polarity is one of the muddiest. Much that passes under the socialist flag does not mean to invite the regimentation and coercion of a Marxist bureaucratic state; it is rhetorical, almost mystical. Much that is capitalist is democratic, even populist.

2. *Democratic vs. dictatorial.* This polarity cuts across the former one. Some socialist regimes are democratic, some capitalist regimes are dictatorial. When journalists describe the Muslims of Lebanon as left wing and the Christians as right wing, they do not really mean that the Muslims are more democratic, liberal, and committed to civil liberties, due process, elections, and a free press. The hostility of many black "revolutionaries" to liberalism springs from energies not more liberal than their opposites, but less.

3. *The principle of subsidiarity vs. strong centralized government.* According to the principle of subsidiarity, each level of social organization should be responsible for every function within its power, and the next higher level should intrude only for tasks that cannot be achieved by the lower. In recent decades, since 1932, the liberal solution to many ailments of American society—especially concerning race—has been to employ strong central government as a counterpoise to failures or corruptions on lower levels. The principle of subsidiarity is the more liberal principle—enhancing liberty and vitality on every level—but a clear pragmatic judgment may from time to time draw the line of interaction at a higher or a lower point. It is neither liberal nor illiberal to favor a strong central government; it depends.

4. *Individual merit vs. special privilege or group entitlement.* An aristocratic society may be liberal. Still, a democratic appreciation for individual achievement, whatever the individual's position by birth, status, privilege, or wealth, and whatever the realities of the "old-boy network," or nepotism, or familism, or ethnic belonging, seems clearly to be the deeper liberal impulse. In the effort to overcome group disadvantage, and in the hope that equality of results now will breed equality of opportunity in the future, some blacks have attacked this liberal principle. Attributing their group's relative failure (as they see it) to discriminatory attitudes and practices on the part of others, rather than to inadequacies or faults of their own, some seek to undermine respect for individual achievement and to insist on statistical distribution. No known law states that human talent is spread with statistical equality throughout the population in any single generation. No human law shows that culture has no bearing on ability. The liberal principle is to recognize talent by individual achievement, not by statistical representation.

5. *Egalitarian rule vs. republican rule.* Some hold that the only source of legitimate authority is a majoritarian vote on every issue. Others hold that there are many kinds and sources of authority (including experience, learning, and accomplishment), which it is well to keep in check-and-balance. The latter seems to be the more liberal position. It is based on an appropriate respect for corruptions of every form of authority, including majority rule.

6. *Democratic taste vs. elitist taste.* A full statement of this polarity requires additional terms: one must distinguish democratic taste from mindless "popular" taste, and genuine elitist taste from mindless "middlebrow" taste. The ability to respect skill, beauty, and achievement in humble arts, outside the canons of high art, constitutes democratic taste. It is a cultural world removed from

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mere indulgence in what is "popular." To parrot elitist tastes, on the other hand, is to be a mere middlebrow; it is by no means to enter a genuine elite. To belong to a genuine elite is to be able to appreciate the skills, beauties, and achievements belonging to the canons of special elites down the ages.

In this sense, to have a genuine democratic taste is to have a broader range than to have an elitist taste; on the other hand, to acquire an elitist taste is to submit in a praiseworthy manner to special social disciplines nourished through the ages. A genuine democratic taste and a genuine elitist taste may (or may not) feed one another, and blossom in the same person. To nourish both forms of taste is the full liberal ideal. It would be contrary to the liberal ideal mindlessly to love either what is popular or what has been decreed by previous elites.

7. *Cultural depth vs. the flow of instinct.* As a defensive measure against those whose instincts have been tutored to certain perceptions, habits, or skills—that is to say, against those of a stronger cultural foundation—some have praised the immediacy and "flow" of feeling and instinct. This is in part a false polarity; for all instinct has been conditioned by a culture. The true comparison is between the differential powers of different cultures. Cultures cannot *simply* be compared; but, for certain purposes, in certain contexts, they can be compared. For example, the fact that one man speaks ghetto English and another a literate, free, standard English may not, *sub specie aeternitatis* or on the moral scale, make one the lesser or one the greater human being. But for certain tasks, in certain situations, at certain pay scales, one may be altogether more preferable than the other to prospective employers. Since culture is highly purposive, selective, and discriminating, educators would seem to be deceiving those they would leave without marketable skills.

THE rhetoric of the black revolution created by many white radicals is illiberal with respect to each of these seven polarities. That rhetoric is often (1) cheaply socialist. It is (2) dictatorial. It is (3) mindlessly devoted to favors from a strong, centralized government. (Even community control seemed during its short life to be a slogan for divvying up the pie rather than for assuming heavier responsibilities.*) It is (4) in favor of special status as a "legitimate minority" and group entitlement, rather than in favor of tests for individual excellence. It is (5) majoritarian, without respect for wisdom, experience, or checks-and-balances. It has (6) added to the general confusion about both a genuine democratic taste and a genuine elitist taste, by tending to collapse standards in the first realm and to pour contempt on those in the second. It (7) exalts instinct, minimizes the effects of culture, and avoids the disciplines of self-criticism. It traps us in endless cycles of mediocrity and solipsism, and is unable to bear the pain of cultural comparison.

This last is the most dishonest move of all. On the one hand, we are to believe that the reason for present compensation (or even retribution) is "cultural disadvantage" suffered in preceding generations. A standard of cultural comparison is evoked. Then, on the other hand, we are barred from making intercultural comparisons as explanations for such matters as differential reading skills, wage scales, opportunities for employment, or political participation. It is often remarked, for example, that pay scales for blacks tend to be lower than for whites of the same educational background; but it is not remarked that the average black graduating from high school is three years behind the average white in basic skills. (This is true even where educational financing is equal.)

THE items of ideology mentioned above may not have concrete purchase on the careers of many black Americans—as the recent lectures by Jesse Jackson and serious emphasis by most black leaders demonstrate. Still, illiberal ideologies are not likely to generate liberal methods or to reach liberal goals. The corruption of our reasoning powers is magnified in international affairs by substituting Third World ideologies for our own ideologies of the "black revolution" at home. (Jimmy Carter called Vietnam a "racist" war. Were not our allies in Vietnam of the same race as our opponents? Did not Americans of all races fight and die there together?)

Just over one hundred years ago, the ancestors of most American Jews lived in enforced ghettos; the ancestors of most American Catholics were serfs; the ancestors of most American blacks were slaves; the ancestors of most Americans of all cultures and races lived in bitter poverty in underdeveloped nations. (Bicentennial parades illustrate how far we have come even in three or four generations.) Where would the image of "development" have come on earth, if not from America during these last frantic, electric, vital, and liberal one hundred years? It is indispensable to our public moral health to distinguish the liberal ideal from the corruptions it has suffered from racialist thinking. For liberalism belongs to all races and cultures. Its corruption destroys the hopes even of those who injure it.

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* This is shown by the otherwise inexplicable passion generated by the term "benign neglect"—a Harvard turn of phrase, after all, for "cool it."

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Kevin Phillips: The terms conservative and liberal are not yet entirely useless, if only because they remain necessary shorthand on many occasions, but both are increasingly obsolescent and misleading.

This should hardly be surprising. After all, conservatism and liberalism are not ancient doctrinal verities preserved for the ages in the vaults of *National Review* and the *New Republic*. On the contrary, like Left and Right, they are terms of modern political coinage, specific French revolutionary and industrial-era categorization, and relevance limited to transitional and industrial-era polities in which conservative economic elites oppose a liberal emerging middle class or working class.

When the relationships change, so must the terminology. And this change has clearly occurred over the last ten to twenty years with the shift of the U.S. economy from a manufacturing predominance to a knowledge-and-services thrust. Some 30-40 per cent of the GNP is now accounted for by the production, consumption, and dissemination of knowledge, and in the most affluent residential areas of the nation, researchers, communicators, and theorists are displacing manufacturers, transporters, and natural-resources extractors.

Daniel Bell has called it the post-industrial revolution. Samuel Beer argues that "the media revolution is as powerful as the industrial revolution was," and John Kenneth Galbraith suggests that organized intelligence plays the critical role today that capital played in the industrial era.

True enough. And much of the political revolt and ideological confusion of the last decade arises from the uprising of Middle America—substantially the same South, West, and ethnic North that have been the engine of past U.S. populist upheaval—against that "organized intelligence," its bureaucracy, guidelines, commercialized change, bungled computerized wars, and racial balance.

Opposition to these abusive forces has frequently been described as conservative, which is only partially accurate. There is, obviously, a real conservatism of sorts present in the predilection for patriotism, neighborhoods, old values, ethnic kinships, and other Middle American *social* needs neglected by 1964-72 "organized intelligence" with the same abandon that 19th-century capitalists rode roughshod over "little man" *economic* needs. But such Middle American conservatism does *not* encompass support for old conservative elitist economics, and this is where the lingering residue of old conservative types go wrong in vastly overinflating the relevance and appeal of their ideology, notwithstanding the many polls that show a growing American "conservatism."

Back in 1969, I tried to explain to one wire-service reporter that the Republican and conservative opportunity was *populist*-conservative, a Middle American blend of social conservatism and economic activism. Virtually alone among his fellows, this reporter got it right and wrote it that way: populist-conservative. But most journalists do not differentiate, and simply attach a knee-jerk profile to the label conservative. Only a year and a half ago, *Fortune* magazine pictured me seeing a majority-sized opportunity for "true-blue" conservatism.

I say this not to attach a Downtown Club mentality to *Fortune* political writers but rather to point out another example of the inaccuracy of conservative-liberal nomenclature. If liberal has become so unpopular a term that Morris Udall(!!) chose to abandon it, conservative has become a terminological umbrella of fundamental contradiction. There are conservatives whose game it is to quote English poetry and utter neo-Madisonian benedictions over the interests and institutions of establishment liberalism. Then there are other conservatives—many I know—who have more in common with Andrew Jackson than with Edmund Burke. Their hope is to build cultural siege-cannon out of the populist steel of Idaho, Mississippi, and working-class Milwaukee, and then blast the Eastern liberal establishment to ideo-institutional smithereens.

IF EXISTING terminology isn't particularly useful in describing these hostilities, the failure of liberal organized intelligence has created yet another set of circumstances that sidesteps conservative-liberal nomenclature. Like 20's Weimar Germany, the United States is gripped by a malaise arising from our first war loss, inflationary destabilization of the middle class, loss of faith in our governmental institutions, and popular alienation from the moral decadance of the intelligentsia. This type of situation often yields a politics that Seymour Martin Lipset has described as neither liberal nor conservative but center-extremist—the politics of middle-class frustration.

In Germany and elsewhere, center-extremist politicians have risen on a politics of themes rather than issues, personal trust and charisma, religion (or quasi-religion), nationalism or ethnic purity, outsidership and restoration of traditional values. If that reminds you of somebody's 1976 campaign, well. . . .

But setting aside the question of ex-Baptist missionary Jimmy Carter's potential to recreate the imperial Presidency as a messianic Presidency, there is no doubt that the former Georgia governor is well ahead of most of the public and punditry corps in realizing that the old language of conservative and liberal is on its way to becoming ideological Sanskrit. Carter's mix of anti-Washington outsidership, socio-cultural conservatism, and activist economic liberalism defies categorization, but it may just be the closest thing to the New Majority/Silent Majority outlook in the 1976 presidential campaign.

Without Watergate, Richard Nixon might have cemented a new ideological regime. Now, how-

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ever, the opportunity may be passing to Jimmy Carter. If defeated, the GOP may crumble. And on the other side, Louis Harris surveys show independent presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy with 10 per cent national support, and there is already talk that California's Governor, Jerry Brown, will lead a "liberal" revolt against Carter and oppose him in the 1980 primaries. New schisms and alignments may help nurture some more useful political descriptive terminology.

But it will probably take a while before conservative and liberal yield to appropriate new labels. Back in autumn 1975, speaking at Dartmouth College, Jimmy Carter could only suggest that we were in a post-liberal era. As with Daniel Bell's post-industrial phraseology, it's easier to describe what we have passed beyond than to define the categories of the future.

KEVIN PHILLIPS *is a syndicated columnist and editor of the* American Political Report. *His most recent book is* Mediacracy: American Parties and Politics in the Communications Age.

William Phillips: Yes, there has been some switching of political tags and positions, but only those who wish to cloud the issues can claim that the essential difference between Left and Right has been totally obliterated. And if the intention of this symposium on the meaning of such terms as conservatism, liberalism, Left, Right, is to emphasize that a certain amount of confusion has crept into the use of these terms and that to recite a conservative or radical catechism is not a substitute for thinking—if the intention, that is, is one of political clarification, then I think it is a much needed inquiry. But if it results mostly in proving that the terms are meaningless, it can only add to the excess of confusion today. For, however inexact, these old labels do indicate the direction of one's politics. After all, nobody thinks that William F. Buckley, Jr., is a liberal or a radical, nor can we mistake Herbert Marcuse for a man of the Right.

More than a hundred years ago, two leading figures, Edmund Burke and John Stuart Mill, one a "conservative," the other a "liberal," both laid down the classic description of conservatism as essentially a belief in the viability of existing social institutions, radicalism as a belief in the necessity of changing those institutions to realize certain political and human ideals, and liberalism as a middle ground of reform and mediation. And up to now these distinctions have served to make some sense out of what would otherwise be a melange of opinions—though, obviously, each position represented a range of beliefs, and has changed with changing historical circumstances. The examples cited by the editors of COMMENTARY—attitudes to economic growth, quota systems, decentralization, big government—are of course illustrations of these shifts. But it is not a matter of playing musical chairs with political slogans: even though these changes do reflect shifting responses to new situations, they have not so blurred traditional lines as to make socialists indistinguishable from Tories. Hence I think it would be more useful to look at the reason for certain shifts of position than to lament or gloat over the seeming contradictions and ambiguities in the use of what are essentially only convenient labels.

SOME of the shifts have come from purely tactical considerations. Thus it is now in the interest of conservatives to oppose a quota system and for radicals to favor it, as it is in the matter of busing —though no stand on these questions can be found either in the *Communist Manifesto* or in *Mein Kampf*. Other shifts, like the new conservative line against big government and for decentralization, obviously represent typical right-wing demagogy, designed to appeal to populist sentiments and to deflect the general discontent at rising taxes to support increased federal spending. On the other hand, the movement to decentralize the schools in New York some years ago was mostly a power play that had nothing to do either with genuinely radical politics or with education itself. But I think the major shifts reflect the accommodations of the Left to Russian policy, a policy that is often confusing because it combines nationalism with the remnants of Marxist doctrine. For example, the Left-liberal hostility to Israel, or the support of the Arabs and the Third World, have nothing to do with traditional Marxist theory; nor is the jockeying of the American government against the moves of the Soviets always consistent with conservative thinking. Similarly, as the Communists shuttle from revolutionary to reformist stances, both the conservatives and the liberals keep changing their own tactics and theories. The recent turn in the Communist line in Europe is a dramatic instance of these somersaults; for the socialists and the independent liberals abroad have moved Left—many to Maoism—to outflank the Communists and to expose their "betrayal" of the revolution.

In this country, the New Left—as well as the New Right—also went in for notions of decentralized politics and thinking. But it seems to me that these expressions of anti-intellectualism, which had more to do with native populism than with the theoretical heritage of Marxism, can be understood mostly as a means of dissociating from the monolithic structure and thinking of the Communists. (Abroad, too, the agitation for decentralization and for workers councils by the anti-Communist Left was a direct challenge to the

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bureaucratic controls of the Communist parties and governments.) Similarly, economic growth is often opposed by some of the Left in this country, for they believe that human progress demands the curbing of American power, even though all of Marx's thinking rested on the idea of full economic development. Another example of this kind of distortion can be seen in a recent analysis by Geoffrey Barraclough of the economic relations between the West and the Third World, in which, in my opinion, all the classic assumptions of Marxism are turned upside down. Barraclough assumes the decline of the West and the triumph of the Third World to be signs of progress, which is just the opposite of Marx's vision of the future socialist society as a further extension of all the gains of Western civilization.

On the other hand, conservatives have also opportunistically jumped in to fill a vacuum or to exploit a weakness on the Left. Thus the excessive and demagogic emphasis of conservatives on law-and-order, and on national security, to which the liberals and the Left are presumably indifferent; and the conservative dedication to freedom, particularly for the Communist countries, which much of the Left holds to be secondary to economic justice. At the moment, détente is identified with a conservative administration, though it is not opposed by liberals or radicals, who see it as a diplomatic anti-war move. But the devotion to peace by both Right and Left is mainly strategic, and, if we can go by the past, cannot be assumed to be a permanent political stand.

In any case, one's political identity cannot be reduced to—or wiped out by—temporary stands and shifts. And it seems to me that one of the main sources of confusion today is the denial of one's position by conservatives, liberals, or radicals—the concealing of one's views, that is, by people who do not want to be pinned down politically. Nothing but doublethink and doubletalk are served by Communists who parade as liberals, by conservatives who claim to be socialists, by liberals who pretend to be unpolitical—and by academic "socialists" who are socialists only on Sunday. For it is in this gray political area that innocence and calculation meet.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS *is the editor of* Partisan Review, *professor of English at Rutgers, and the author of* A Sense of the Present.

Earl Raab: In the marketplace there is a growing hesitancy to call oneself, or one's friends, liberal or conservative. The terms are more widely used to describe those who hold doubtful political tendencies. They are increasingly terms of mutual scorn.

It is tempting to accept them for what they have become. As expletives, they have a certain rough utility in "placing" those who wield them.

However, for sanity's sake, there should probably be an occasional effort to rescue liberalism and conservatism from definition as those beliefs which are held by the people who are so reproachfully termed liberals and conservatives. At the least, it is taxonomically perverse. There is no great mystery about the different axes of broad political tendency. The problem is that liberalism and conservatism are imperfect antonyms at best.

For example, there is one political scale which has to do with control: the ability of the individual to be relatively free from constraints of state in the expression of beliefs, temperaments, native capacities, desires for privacy and association. Then there is the scale which has to do with distribution: the relative broadening or narrowing of the base of privilege and wealth. It may make some historical sense to call both of these scales of liberalism. It is incontestably liberal to oppose repression and the oppressive accumulation of wealth and power. But in this sense the scales do not measure liberal *vs.* conservative so much as liberal *vs.* illiberal—unless one simply wants to equate conservatism with repression and/or oppression. In that case, the discussion is over and we are back to the kind of shambles in which the Soviet government must be accounted the most conservative entity in the world, which nobody really wants to mean. The Soviet government is not conservative; it is illiberal.

The conservatism axis has, of course, to do with the strategy of change. Conservatism cannot be against change and still be effectively conservative, as Edmund Burke pointed out. But for various reasons the conservative is interested in a strategy of change which will not sever us precipitately, or at all, from certain values rooted in the continuous past—and therefore does not seem to rush in as headlong a fashion toward change as does the non-conservative whose focus is more exclusively on the future. There being some historical reason to call this counter-tendency liberal, this is the gradient which might be most legitimately called a conservatism-liberalism scale.

So, posing the first two gradients against the third, there are liberals who are conservative, and those who are liberal; illiberals who are conservative, and those who are liberal. The foregoing is not a set of madhouse hypotheses, but of rather demonstrable facts.

In the marketplace, of course, these distinctions will not be made, and in part, it is just as well. The word illiberal does not sing. Besides, we can normally plot what is meant, in context, and that serves the minimal purpose of language. In one context, these days, the liberal is the one who supports more government action for welfare; the conservative, less. In another context, the liberal pushes civil rights; the conservative lags. In still

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another context, the liberal is less concerned about the Communists than is the conservative. And so forth.

However, as the internal contradictions of such mini-speak multiply, they get in the way of analytic dialogue. The language-blur gets in the way of explaining the fundamentally liberal impulse behind a good part of the anti-quota fervor. It always did get in the way of persuading all-around liberals that their natural enemies are really the left-wing totalitoids who are sitting on their "liberal" perch; or persuading the liberals of conservative persuasion that their natural enemies are really the laissez-faire ideologues or uncaring monopolists who are sitting on their "conservative" perch.

But, finally, the language problem is always more a consequence than a cause of political confusion.

The liberalism of freedom and distributive liberalism are always destined to be in one or another state of conflict. That conflict will be adjusted at any given time on the third axis, the liberal-conservative axis of attitudes toward change. It is perhaps by good instinct that today most of the country, overwhelmingly liberal rather than illiberal on the first two scales, is turning conservative rather than liberal on the third. It is possible that language clarification might make it easier to develop the more conscious and intellectual understanding that in order to be more consistently liberal today, it is necessary to be conservative.

But don't count on it.

EARL RAAB, *executive director of the San Francisco Jewish Community Council, is the author of* Social Problems *and (with Seymour Martin Lipset)* The Politics of Unreason.

Diane Ravitch: One of the chief casualties of the ideological struggles of the late 60's was liberalism in American politics. As the spectrum of debate moved leftward, radicals focused on liberals as their primary target and held them responsible both for the tragedy of Vietnam and the inadequacies of the war on poverty. The attacks of the radical Left splintered liberalism, converting some ex-liberals to radicalism (as though it were a logical extension of liberalism) and pushing others into what has come to be called neoconservatism.

Before the radicalization of the Left, liberalism was comprehensible as a political position and as an ideology. Liberals opposed discrimination in any guise; the phrase, "without regard to race, color, creed, or sect," was then both honorable and meaningful. Liberals perceived technological advance and economic development as forces that could be harnessed to improve the quality of human life. Liberals believed that the federal government could play a useful role in achieving the promise of American life for all citizens, without compromising their basic liberties. Liberals adhered to the idea that the preservation of the democratic political process, with all of its problems, its compromises, and its gradualism, was more important than any particular political goals of the moment; the means, in other words, were more important than the ends, no matter how worthy.

ALL of these tenets have come under vigorous scrutiny in the past decade, and few have emerged intact. Unhappily, many have been transformed in ways that divorce them from their original meaning. This has happened, I believe, not because of serious debate or deliberate choice, but because of a lack of it; not because the people through their elected representatives have rejected liberal precepts, but because the issues and the assumptions infusing our political life have been inadequately articulated and superficially considered.

Thus, we find the media describing as liberal the imposition of racial quotas in jobs, housing, and education, just as only a few years ago calls for racially separate facilities and programs were also characterized as liberal. Or, the label liberal is attached equally to those who advocate coerced school integration, regardless of the degree of centralization required to effect it, and to those who demand local control of schools. The distortion here is that, in the very influential eyes of the mass media, the farther Left one goes politically, the more "liberal" he or she is presumed to be. But anyone with a sense of American history knows that this is a foolish misunderstanding of the 20th-century liberal tradition, and in particular, of its recognition of the need to balance the competing demands of equality, liberty, and fraternity.

The liberal goal during most of this century has been to construct a society where everyone has equal political and civil rights, extensive personal freedom, a decent standard of living, and legal safeguards against governmental tyranny. An integral part of the liberal thrust has been to eliminate factitious, ascriptive distinctions based on race, sex, religion, or social origins. The corruption of the word liberal, which has gone through various changes in our history, is of little concern; the apparent eclipse of the political ideology that it has represented is a matter of consequence.

DIANE RAVITCH *is the author of* The Great School Wars.

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Harold Rosenberg: Liberalism is, of course, always changing its content. That is because it is, in essence, not a fixed political or social program or ideology but an expression of generous feelings, particularly toward the poor, the badly treated, and dependent people. Social critics without generous feelings may be right about the history of liberal positions but they are not liberals. When I hear suggestions about "counting the costs" of desegregation or of full employment, or of "moving too fast" in protecting the environment, I find it hard to identify those who urge these cautions as liberals and am rather inclined to regard them as defenders of privilege. If desegregation is uncomfortable, liberalism calls on whites who are opposed to it to suffer the discomfort. Some day through desegregation, all blacks will be as well-educated, refined, good-looking, amiable, and pleasant to have as neighbors as anyone else. More pleasant, certainly, than segregationists, Ronald Reagan, Richard Nixon, "right-to-life" agitators, and enemies of nude bathing.

Liberalism starts with the assumption that "counting the costs" of improving life is made unnecessary by progress—those who continue to count do so out of niggardliness. Modern man can afford improvement; he has the resources in wealth, knowledge, and, above all, potentiality (if social impediments are removed) to ease anyone into the material conditions of the middle class and into the good-natured mental state of the liberal. With poverty and ignorance done away with, there would be an end to wars, dictatorships, and so on.

Generosity of feeling is unassailable. The weakness of liberalism today is that it has been losing its clientele through the acquisition of power by everybody, at least the power to make their own demands. No need for generosity of feeling when all are in a position to grab for themselves. Liberalism receives a stunning blow each time it finds itself supporting a social force that is aggressively engaged in achieving gains. Since World War I liberalism has been hit this way again and again—by immigrants, labor, women, young people, blacks—until it now finds itself staggering around with an odd smile on its face, occasionally falling into a fighting posture and going a round of shadow-boxing. When housemaids got 25¢ an hour, the New Deal lady of the house could add a dime to the going rate and agitate for minimum-wage legislation. Try having this feeling for a high-school kid who gets $4 an hour and goofs off to smoke pot between making the bed and vacuuming the rug. Or for the appliance-repair man who charges $46.75 an hour, because, his wife or secretary informs you over the telephone, he considers himself to be "a kind of doctor" (maybe he cures washing machines by listening to their dreams).

Equally destructive for liberalism as the defection of its clients was its support of the Soviet regime in the 30's, as extreme a case of misapplied generosity as any recorded in human history. In their "defense of the Soviet Union," the majority of American liberals ranged themselves on the side of Stalin's tyranny, which was quite capable of taking care of itself, and against its victims—socialists, Trotskyites, dissenters, individuals who refused to lick boots—who were not. What remained of political liberalism was embodied in John Dewey and his Commission of Inquiry that went to Mexico to take testimony from Trotsky concerning the Moscow trial frameups. But even at that time they were attacked for being "softheaded" and "bleeding hearts." Tough liberals knew that the real issue was not truth and justice but the Popular Front Against War and Fascism.

The accommodation to Soviet power initiated the evolution of a liberal who is the opposite of a liberal, a liberal with a political yea or nay but without a commitment to any ideal or social group. From the servitude of Communist fellow-traveling, liberalism passed over to official anti-Communism and service to the FBI, congressional committees, CIA-supported foundations and publishing projects (see my "Couch Liberalism and the Guilty Past" in *The Tradition of the New*, 1959), to end in intellectual fraternization with Nixon-Agnew. The heart of today's new liberalism is caution against being swept by currents of the old liberal generosity and expansiveness.

CONSERVATISM has a philosophy when it is able to contend that advantages in wealth and social position are acquired as a matter of right—God-given, earned through initiative and hard work, or derived through ethnic or cultural superiority. In America today, while inequality is accepted as a fact, it lacks the metaphysical basis provided abroad by superstitions associated with the aristocratic heritage. American conservatism is merely a series of rationalizations for holding onto what one has. Since its kernel is personal hoarding, as a point of view it is a joke. I am being driven through Kansas by a gentleman who describes the region we are in as one of the most beautiful in America, and which is in the process of being acquired by the federal government for a national park. He tells me that when the Secretary of the Interior arrived by plane to inspect the terrain he was chased away at gun point by the owner of the land, one of the state's leading multi-millionaires, who threatened to shoot him as a trespasser. A liberal defending the rights of the individual against governmental abuse? A conservative standing in the way of a better life for the people? Soon we pass a huge billboard urging all Americans to protect their freedom by helping to defeat the acquisition of the land as a public

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park. Defend your right, the landlord is saying, to have me kick you off my land.

New liberalism might go along with this logic, which is not so different from that of Gerald Ford in vetoing the current bill to provide 350,000 jobs on the grounds that federal jobs are not "real" jobs, though he himself has spent his life on the federal payroll.

In an article entitled "Whatever Happened to Liberalism?" Michael Novak wants to know whether a group of new liberals should be called "New Liberals" or "New Conservatives." The answer is contained in the question: both liberalism and conservatism have lost their identities. Shaky because lacking either the liberal or the conservative tradition, all the new lib-con can do is to back away from long-held hopes and ideals by contending that the public, the poor, the ill-treated are less objects of concern than those who have more to lose than their chains. Conservative? Liberal? It is the age of farce, foreshadowed by Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.*

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Richard H. Rovere: Conservative, liberal, Left, Right—in certain contexts the terms serve to describe attitudes, temperaments, tendencies. But when one is dealing with political ideas and public policies in this country at this time, they are, in my view, all but useless and sometimes hinder analysis. Is there a conservative or a liberal way of determining the national interest? The editors cite "support for economic growth" as a position that was once considered liberal and is now identified as conservative: until very recently, though, growth was favored by both conservatives and liberals—and, for that matter, by radicals—and the second thoughts that some are now having rest on considerations that are primarily environmental. Since Left and Right breathe the same air and have the same stake in the future, it makes little sense to discuss these matters in any but empirical terms. I find myself interested in the question of whether or not we should use nuclear power as a source of energy, but I know of no way in which liberal or conservative doctrine can be of use in finding an intelligent answer. As one who drinks water from the Hudson River, I have a strong interest in having it depolluted, but I acquire and express that interest as a consumer, not as an adherent of any particular social or political philosophy.

The editors ask if it matters how the terms are used. Of course it does; it always matters how any words are used and misused. Since one has at times to come to terms with the prevailing usage, I can call Ronald Reagan and his followers conservatives, but it seems to me an obligation to point out that they are in fact reactionaries with quite radical aims. Such issues as capital punishment and abortion are more theological than political, but they have become politicized, and it seems generally the case that most of those who call themselves conservative take one stand (for capital punisment, against abortion), while most liberals take the opposite. If there is a case for the B-1 bomber it is a military, technological, and economic one, but it has become almost a touchstone of liberal (anti) and conservative (pro) political doctrine.

I THINK of myself as being in some respects conservative, in some liberal, in some radical, but when descriptions are called for I generally classify myself as a liberal. I do this not as a way of defining a philosophy I find congenial but mostly, I think, because I like the tradition, the associations, the company. In some circumstances I might well prefer to be thought of as a conservative. But being an American conservative today seems to mean that one takes seriously the pretensions of Reagan and President Ford, men I find mean-spirited, narrow-minded, often downright ignorant. There are times when I find William F. Buckley, Jr., providing insights not offered by his liberal counterparts, but when, in *National Review,* he offers Reagan as a suitable leader for the nation and James Burnham as a political thinker, I find him mischievous and irresponsible. That there are liberals who can thus be described I do not doubt, but the tradition they are part of is for the most part a generous and humane one, and these are qualities that seem more and more important to me—at least, as they say, for starters, even on such matters, cited by the editors, as quota systems. It is true that liberals used to oppose them and now often favor them. I tend to dislike them, but it has, I think, to be noted that those who once supported them did so because they saw them as a device for excluding certain groups, while those who now support them, the liberals, do so in order to include the formerly excluded. Though the principle may still be an unsound one, the differences in motivation seem at least important enough to be observed.

RICHARD H. ROVERE, *who writes regularly on politics for the* New Yorker, *is the author of* Senator Joe McCarthy *and* The American Establishment.

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Bayard Rustin: What we have witnessed is not so much the redefinition of terms like liberal and conservative as a subtle process whereby the concepts themselves have been manipulated and mutilated so thoroughly as to have lost all relevant meaning for many, perhaps for most, Americans. Liberalism and conservatism are not, of course, the only politically significant labels to have been stripped of their meaning. The word racism, too, no longer conveys a precise meaning or communicates an important concept. Properly used, racism refers to a conscious ideology of race superiority on cultural, physical, or intellectual grounds, and it justifies the exclusion of a particular race from normal participation in society. But for many, racism has now lost that specific meaning; it has become nothing more than a demagogic epithet to be applied at will. Thus Daniel P. Moynihan, who has devoted much of his career as academic and government official to devising strategies for the abolition of racial inequality, and James Coleman, integrationist scholar, have been called racists in the same breath with Strom Thurmond and George Wallace.

This distortion of the language of politics is not only demagogic, however. It reveals attitudes that are irrational and dangerous. The refusal to acknowledge as valid any idea that conflicts with currently accepted dogma; the lack of honesty in dealing with racial issues; the reluctance to argue legitimate opposing views on their merits, preferring instead a rhetorical rebuttal—all have contributed to a prolongation of many of our severest racial problems.

In some cases the distortion of words like racist results from the passions of the hour. Oftentimes, however, the distortion arises out of the deliberate intent of placing one's opponents on the moral defensive.

Liberalism has been similarly distorted, both in word and concept, although for different reasons and in a different historical context.

For some, the redefinition of liberalism became a question of class interest. Among the "reform" wing of the Democratic party, the so-called New Left, for instance, we saw a basic shift away from the traditional liberal commitments. It all began when the New Left insisted that economic problems—always at the forefront of the liberal agenda—be made secondary to such contemporary concerns as "life style," ecology, psychological liberation, and national moral purification. According to this revision, further gains for working people, requiring as they would a greater expansion of the nation's wealth and productive capacity, were not only unnecessary but might even be undesirable.

As for the blacks, the "reformers" argued that their poverty could be alleviated through schemes of community control, participatory democracy, economic "self-determination," or, alternatively, through quota systems. When they were warned that such attitudes might drive the Democratic party's traditional constituency—the working men and women—to the ranks of the conservatives, they responded that they could mold a new and more enlightened coalition—with themselves, of course, at the helm, replacing labor and the political representatives of working people as the dominant force. Thus, it is clear that there were elements of both class interest and of class bias in the propagation of this new agenda for liberalism.

Another element at work was that many of the younger liberal activists had had their initial political experiences in movements and causes having little connection with the needs and aspirations of ordinary people—the anti-war movement, ecology, women's liberation, political reform. Indeed, at times their objectives clashed openly with those of workers, as, for example, when ecologists sought the closing of a factory despite the fact that closing it would result in massive unemployment. In such cases, there was an undeniable tendency for many of the young activists to dismiss the workers' concerns as mere roadblocks standing in the way of their self-defined good society.

It will be argued that many liberals did not subscribe to this new notion of politics which placed a low priority on the needs of the ordinary American. This is true enough, and is certainly the case today, when full employment is the first item on every liberal's program. The fact is, however, that many traditional Democrats were alienated by this movement which *appeared* to be taking a new and, for many, a disturbing direction. Moreover, large numbers of people took this new movement as evidence that even the traditional liberals had lost their vision and no longer had a coherent idea of the kind of society and world order they wished to create.

THUS the question confronting us now must be how to resolve the confusion and defeatism that have infected American society. The experience of the past year strongly suggests that the new shibboleths determining who is a liberal have little significance. What is important, however, is whether we can build a truly liberal movement that is prepared to take on the crucial issues of the day.

Such a movement would deal strongly with the recent objections to government activism in domestic affairs. (Here is as good an example as any of how the blurring and distorting of liberalism's principles have contributed to a situation in which leading Democrats feel compelled to describe themselves as progressives or centrists because of the low esteem to which liberalism has fallen.) One simply cannot go around talking about the limits of government—as an increasing number of liberals have done—and then expect to

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present the voters with ambitious proposals for national health insurance, government-funded jobs for the unemployed, the federalization of welfare, and programs to rebuild the cities without further alienating an electorate already embittered by the manifest deceits of the immediate past administration.

In racial affairs, this movement would reestablish government support for integration and the full participation of minorities in all aspects of society. It would emphasize the central role of economics and full employment in the achievement of a racially equal society, while recognizing the limitations of social engineering. It would also choose manpower policies, special training programs, and other similar approaches over the imposition of quotas and other undemocratic devices.

I BELIEVE that the prospects for the success of such a strategy are excellent. Certainly the favorable response to Daniel P. Moynihan's vigorous reassertion of American ideals in the United Nations indicates that many people are eager for a forthright, intelligent politics of hope and progress. There are also elements of the Carter candidacy which are encouraging. His call for reconciliation and advancement at home and defense of democracy abroad, as well as his appeal to the ideals and aspirations of ordinary Americans, stand out in marked contrast to the politics of the recent past. In 1968 Eugene McCarthy appealed openly to a narrow, middle-class elite, and boasted of having won the support of the better-educated. Four years later, George McGovern, appealing to the same constituency, asked Americans to repent of their collective guilt. Meanwhile, at the opposite extreme, Nixon and Wallace pandered to fears they had helped generate. The liberal ideal of a strong, compassionate, and forward-looking America—an America unashamed of its support for democratic principles—has been buffeted from within and without. But the traditional values and goals of liberals remain valid—even if they are no longer called liberal. These are, moreover, distinctly American values and goals. At least this is what I believe Americans have been trying to say in this confused and yet ultimately hopeful year.

BAYARD RUSTIN, *president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute and national chairman of Social Democrats, U.S.A., is the author of* Strategies for Freedom: The Changing Pattern of Black Protest.

Edward Shils: I always disliked the sickly watery socialistically inclined liberalism of the *Nation* and the *New Republic* of the late 20's and the 30's—which always saw society in a final crisis, which always saw businessmen in the wrong and trade unions in the right, who regarded all politicians except the few who enjoyed their agreement as short-sighted and corrupt. I disliked the belief that the Soviet Union, whatever its particular faults, was in the right and the United States, whatever its merits, was in the wrong whenever they were in conflict and could be compared. I disliked the lack of patriotism of American liberal intellectuals, for whom whatever virtue their country had lay far in its past, while, except among its critics, no virtue was to be found in the present.

I saw through fellow-traveling from the beginning in the 30's and I disliked and still dislike the readiness of the prevailing kind of liberals to find justifications for the causes of the fellow-travelers.

Nonetheless, I must have been a liberal of a sort because I was very despondent on the day Sacco and Vanzetti were executed and I once wrote a letter to the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* to protest the belittling remarks of a writer in that paper, although recalling the paper as it seems to have been and our present press, it was rather a good one. Living in Philadelphia and having a vague knowledge of the Vare machine made it easy for me to be hospitable to the disparaging attitude toward local politicians. Still, the one very minor one I knew, a one-legged Irishman named Tim Collins, seemed a very decent and attractive person.

Nor did I in principle have much sympathy with businessmen, the philistine small-town bankers, merchants, and factory owners who were castigated by Veblen, Lewis, and Mencken, although, again, the few whom I met did not seem all that bad, despite their lack of appreciation of poetry and novels.

During the early 30's I was very sad about the lack of compassion which leading Republican politicians and businessmen showed for the unemployed, and about the ineptitude which allowed the Depression to come on and with which they responded to it once it had come on.

I always had some sympathy with social democrats, partly because in the United States there were so many immigrants among them, partly because there were workingmen among them. I always thought it was a considerable moral and intellectual achievement for a workingman with very little schooling to read and to adopt a fairly comprehensive and elaborate view of society and of the world, even if it was wrong; I still think so. I knew and admired a few autodidactic workingmen. Nonetheless, when they were assertive I disliked it because however much I admired the accomplishment entailed in acquiring these elaborate and comprehensive views, I did not care for the views themselves. I thought it much less admirable for educated persons, who should have known better, to espouse those views, and I still

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do. In the 30's I was marginally amicable with a number of Trotskyites, partly because they were against Stalinists but more because they read Eliot and Dreiser and Dostoevsky and because, despite their wrong-headedness, they were a lively and warm-hearted lot.

I should add that I was also an admirer of Irving Babbitt and was not at all put off by Eliot's declaration that he was an Anglo-Catholic, a royalist, and a classicist.

Still, I thought that the loose egalitarianism of American society was a good thing and I saw through the pretensions of the spurious squirearchical culture of the Main Line, in the neighborhood of which I spent my boyhood and youth. I disliked their illiberal repugnance for the immigrants, their efforts to be the closest thing America had to offer in the way of an aristocracy on the British pattern. I appreciated the Philadelphia maxim which contradicted these pretensions: "In Philadelphia we ask what you do, in Boston they ask what you are." One of the things I liked about the University of Chicago, as soon as I came there, was formulated in the mid-30's by a not very distinguished Ph.D. of the university who said that "when two Chicago graduates meet, they do not ask 'How are you?' They ask, 'What are you working on?' " The appreciation of achievement—of *Leisting*—must have placed me on the side of traditional liberalism.

I DISLIKED, as much as I ever disliked anything about the United States, the lunacy about un-American activities and Senator McCarthy's villainies, even though I had no sympathy whatsoever for the Communists and fellow-travelers who supported far worse tyrannies when they were carried out by Communists. Being opposed to Senator McCarthy and his ilk must have defined me as some sort of liberal! But was I a liberal when I said around the time of the beginning of the civil war in Spain that republican government was at fault for not having taken action against the incendiaries who set the churches on fire? I thought then and I still think that there are limits beyond which the tails of the sacred cows of society may not be twisted. That did not sound very liberal, even to me.

I was an admirer of Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration,* Milton's *Areopagitica,* and to a lesser extent John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty.* I liked Jeremy Bentham and despised Marx's condemnation of him. I zealously studied the writings and for a number of years attended nearly all the seminars of Frank Knight, whose paradoxical liberalism I greatly admired. I was also much taken by Max Weber's rejection of *Gesinnungspolitik* which seemed to represent the attitude of American liberals toward politicians. I was persuaded by Weber's criticism of bureaucracy in *Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland.* That too must have placed me on the liberal side, but not on the side of the American liberalism prevailing at the time.

I favored until a decade ago the Democratic party ever since I chalked on Oxford Street at Twelfth in Philadelphia, one October or November evening in 1916, "Vote for Wilson." (For this I received a blow from my slightly older brother who, with my father, was a partisan of Debs in that election.)

I was active with the Federation of Atomic—later, American—Scientists, just after the war, spoke against the May-Johnson Bill, and wrote a certain amount on behalf of the international control of atomic energy. I got sidetracked from this by the intensified activity of Senator McCarthy. On what has happened since then I have tended to be on the side which radicals called "reactionary": I abominated the "black power" fantasy and the "student revolution" and most of the radical manifestations of the decade which followed the Free Speech Movement. I found the patronage of revolution by *Esquire* and the *New York Review of Books* ridiculous.

I SUPPOSE all these things taken together meant that I was a sort of "liberal," but I never thought of myself as such. In fact, I have never felt the need to classify myself politically or to claim a name. As far as I knew no one else bothered to classify me politically either, although years later I read that one of my contemporaries, who later became quite eminent, declared that I had dissuaded him from belief in socialism; the late Frank Meyer, who had once been a very obnoxious Communist before becoming a saint of a very problematical "conservatism," wrote to me after I had seen or heard nothing of him for many years that he had changed but added that he thought that his newly espoused views would be just as distasteful to me as his old ones had been. So I must have been regarded as a liberal and probably was in fact a liberal of the "Chicago school," even though I never thought about it in such terms. To put it into the language which later became fashionable, I never had an "identity problem."

In fact, although I have thought a fair amount about many things which seemed to me to be important, I never really thought about how I should be described in a political sense. It is only in the last few years that I have given it any thought at all. I was led to do this by the fact that a good friend of mine, Dr. Edward Norman, the dean of Peterhouse, Cambridge, once introduced me to a college guest one evening as "the only Tory sociologist in the world." He meant it as a compliment, but it gave me pause. I certainly have no appreciation for the Labour party in its present condition, but I have not much more for the Conservative party either. Still I could, despite that, be a Tory. I thought a little about it but without conclusion. From time to time, one or another leftist sociologist calls me a conservative but since

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their ignorance is equaled only by their political fanaticism, I have never taken their ill-will to heart.

Then two occurrences within the past few months gave me reason to think more, not about what I believe since I have always been thinking about that, but how I would classify myself. I have had occasion recently, through the generosity of Zbigniew Brzezinski, to read a set of papers by Giovanni Sartori, Robert L. Bartley, Irving Howe, and Charles Frankel on "The Relevance of Liberalism." I was also shown a short essay by my good friend Joseph Epstein, which appears above in this very symposium. Mr. Epstein designates himself as a liberal and I have too high an opinion of him to place myself lightly in a category different from that in which he places himself.

So, TO solve this not very important question, I drew up an inventory of some of my beliefs. Here are a few of them. I believe in the possibility of objectively valid knowledge. I believe in the value of scientific knowledge as truth and for practical purposes, but I also believe that there are fundamental questions to which scientific knowledge cannot provide answers. I believe in the obligation of human beings to look after themselves economically, personally, and intellectually, to use their endowments and talents, their reason and their common sense, and that their accomplishments should be recognized and rewarded accordingly, but again I recognize that there are situations in which this cannot be done and in which the support of society—even the government—and tradition must be called upon. I believe in the integrity of the family and in the value of lineage, and I also believe in the value of equality of opportunity. I believe in the value of neighborhood and municipality and region as patterns of society and as objects of attachment and loyalty; I believe in loyalty to institutions, professions, and societies and states by those who live in them, but I also think that society needs a center as a source and principle of order. At the same time I view with abhorrence and apprehension the arrogation of power by central governments and more particularly of the bureaucracy within government—the latter especially because it is not likely to be controlled by politicians, and even if it could be controlled by politicians, no human beings or institution can exercise such great aggregations of power effectively or humanely. I believe in the according of deference for moral and intellectual attainment and for action for the common good, but I also believe that no human being should ever be degraded below a minimum level of deference—and I also recognize how hard that is to define. I believe that our ancestors have endowed us with a great deal that is valuable and which should be conserved with gratitude; I abominate "with-it" educationists and academics who think that to say that someone is innovative is to place him in the highest category of virtue. I believe in representative institutions, and the competition of politicians to criticize each other and the government and to restrain its activities. I believe in the desirability of reason and scientific knowledge in the guidance of our affairs, private and public, but I am convinced of their limited capacities. I do not think that all problems are soluble by good will or rational, scientifically informed action.

There are many other things which I believe which are relevant to determining whether I am a liberal. Many or all of them are contradictory among themselves and any one of them, carried out in all its fullness, will undo itself and frustrate the others. All these things being considered, I suppose that I am a liberal. I hope that this will not cause displeasure to my liberal friends in the Republican and Democratic parties—and in the Socialist party, if there is one in the United States, and in the Conservative and Labour parties in Great Britain.

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Barbara P. Solomon: When I came back to New York City from a recent trip to Spain I found the COMMENTARY questionnaire on my desk. It had arrived at a moment when I myself had been thinking about the meaning of political vocabulary. I had just witnessed a tumultuous process—a country attempting a transformation from an authoritarian dictatorship toward, it is to be hoped, a more democratic form of government. Naturally, as the political winds have shifted, many fascists are calling themselves democrats—without a clue as to what the word really means—while others are adopting a variety of left-wing symbols and rhetoric, also with very little knowledge of what the terms mean. In Spain these people are called converts. As many Spanish critics have pointed out in examining their own society, it is extremely difficult for Spaniards raised in an authoritarian, Catholic society to abandon their rigid education without succumbing to some other orthodoxy. Thus, there is a windy space, almost unoccupied, for the state of mind reflected in Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination.*

Indeed, any group emerging from *any* religious orthodoxy has an initial tendency to invest political vocabulary with symbolic meanings. In *World of Our Fathers* Irving Howe very movingly describes the American Jewish experience, and correctly juxtaposes the Jewish move toward so-

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cialism with the abandonment of Zion as a future goal. Of all the "isms," liberalism is the most secular; it is the least guilty of viewing politics as a form of religion turned inside out. An almost colorless term, the word liberal has far less symbolic and evocative power than left-wing vocabulary.

Although today the motivations and goals of those who consider themselves Left and those who consider themselves liberals frequently appear to be the same, the underlying thought processes of these two groups are fundamentally very different. Liberalism is most distinguished from leftist ideology by its high valuation of the law and its insistence on the value of the pragmatic.

The Federalist makes it clear that what most characterizes American thought is not merely the idea that all men are created equal, but the underlying concern that man is fundamentally *evil*. It was the strong belief that all governments and the men who run them would be overcome by personal greed and self-interest that led men like Madison to endorse a system heavily reliant on legal philosophy. Inherent in our system of checks and balances is a basic mistrust of government. There are no utopias for the pragmatic. The idea that all men have equal rights is also present in Marxist philosophy, but Marx's greatest weakness is that he did not take into account the fundamental imperfectibility of human nature. In this respect our early pessimistic Americans were psychologically far more sophisticated.

Thus, someone influenced by the liberal mode of examining a problem—such as Brandeis—would not think in terms of the liberal "line" of thought on quota systems, government spending, and so forth. He would deal with such matters in specifics. What matters is a *defense* against the *specific* violation of personal liberty rather than the maintenance of a coherently logical abstract ideology.

ONE of the basic problems in answering the questions raised by this symposium is the framework in which COMMENTARY has posed them. Are we being asked to express our views on the meaning of political language? On the legality of the use of quotas? Is this to be lumped together with theories of economics and attitudes on foreign policy? There are at least four different topics mixed together here—and I would like to suggest that this mode of questioning belongs to those trained to think as ideologues rather than as liberals.

The Left's tendency to ignore legal thought helped make it psychologically impotent during the McCarthy era. Indeed, it was the liberals then, rather than the Left, who brought down McCarthy. In Watergate the liberals also were able to use their legal expertise to bring down Nixon. On the other hand, in their overreliance on law, the liberals have tended to ignore economic realities—more so than the Left. Here is the Left's real strength. And considering that we are still living in an ultra-capitalistic society, I see no reason to believe that the Left's concern with economic theory is outmoded.

BARBARA P. SOLOMON *is the author of* Arriving Where We Started *and* In Need.

Thomas Sowell: Labels are a mental filing system, and the basic question to be asked of any filing system is whether things can be located quickly and accurately. If most of the items filed fall partially in one category and partially in some other (s)—so that a lot of looking is necessary—or if most things end up under "miscellaneous," then clearly the filing system is a disaster. The political labels liberal and conservative are this sort of chaotic filing system. The question is, to what extent is this due to a "misuse" of terms, and to what extent are the ambiguities inherent in the terms themselves?

Conservative is almost by definition a concept virtually devoid of specific content. If a conservative is someone who wants to conserve much of the existing order, then what he is specifically in favor of depends upon what the current order happens to be. The existing order might be 18th-century England or ancient Greece or Maoist China. Immediately another problem with the term becomes apparent: people who want to conserve certain kinds of institutions are never called conservatives. These institutions may be a whole society, such as a Communist country, or specific features of a society, such as labor unions or government regulatory agencies.

Anyone who wanted to get rid of such institutions or societies would be likely to be considered conservative (or reactionary), suggesting a return to some earlier institution (s), even if in fact what he wanted was an order unlike what had existed historically anywhere. Thus, a drastic overhaul of the American monetary system, as advocated by Milton Friedman, is considered a conservative (or reactionary) proposal, even though there has never existed any such monetary system as the one he suggests. Conversely, proposals by John Kenneth Galbraith, which would simply extend policies and practices already in existence, are considered liberal. In this kind of formulation, the terms liberal and conservative do nothing more than arbitrarily designate opposing political teams, and convey no more information than other such arbitrary designations as Dodgers and Mets. A heavy emotional investment in one team or another in no way gives specific intellectual content to the designations.

Historically, the characteristics of the opposing

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teams change over time, so that continuous emotional attachment implies no continuity of principled preference. In politics, the liberal position may require artificial fostering of faster economic growth as a cure for social ills in the 60's and artificial retardation of economic growth as a cure for social ills in the 70's—with opposition to both policies being conservative by definition, just as representatives of a certain baseball franchise are called Giants, regardless of their actual stature.

While the terms liberal and conservative may be more elegant than such designations as 1976-A and 1976-B, they are also much more misleading. Politics is more pretentious than baseball, and cannot openly espouse emotional allegiances based upon accidents of history and geography, however much both activities depend upon such things for their support. Politicians and ideologues must find principles from which their conclusions were derived, even if (1) the conclusions came first, (2) the ostensible connection between the two would make a logician gasp, and (3) their opponents espouse the same principles and reach opposite conclusions.

THE political need to rationalize while dividing the world into "us" and "them" is more than a minor problem in packaging and labeling. It is a major obstacle to the thoughtful consideration of important issues, one by one, on their own individual merits. When a label like liberal or conservative becomes a litmus test of one's loyalties and convictions—or a means of sweepingly dismissing arguments—then the kinds of passions harmlessly discharged in sports partisanship become the arbiters of matters extending even to questions of life and death. In the sports arena or in front of the television set, we *know* that we are being silly, and we enjoy it all the more for knowing it. We can freely indulge the language of mayhem and warfare against opponents and officials alike, secure in the knowledge that it is all just words. We are not always that clear in politics, nor are the consequences so innocuous.

This is not to claim that there are no differences between liberals and conservatives, but rather that there is no general and enduring *principle* behind those differences, just as there are no enduring differences of principle among Dodgers, Mets, and Giants, however much those teams might happen to differ in approach or success at a given time. For example, those who are the most alarmed about the storing of dangerous radioactive wastes, because such materials might be accidentally released under certain unlikely conditions, are generally the least alarmed about the storing of dangerous murderers who are almost certain to be released under existing parole practices. It is obviously not the ostensible principle of protecting society against latent dangers which determines these positions, but instead the current fashions as to the appropriate targets of selective indignation or equally selective complacency.

The increasing rejection of both the liberal and the conservative label is one of the most hopeful political signs of our times—perhaps the *only* hopeful political sign of our times.

THOMAS SOWELL, *currently a fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, is the author of, among other works,* Race and Economics.

Roger Starr: The terms liberal and conservative have often been useful over the years but not continuously. This happens to be one of the less useful periods because, as has been the case before, the meaning of the term liberal is in flux.

At all times, those in the liberal position advocate more widespread distribution of whatever seems most valuable—goods, services, status, education. This generous cast of mind can be justified only if one accepts two assumptions about nature and man. First, one must believe that there is plenty in nature to fill all human requirements. Second, one must believe that the shortage from which some suffer is imposed neither by the state of nature nor by man's lack of productive inventiveness. One must believe that those who suffer from deprivation are the victims of the greed of others, or of institutional failure, or of historic but temporary underdevelopment; these accidents apart, men must be conceived to be roughly equal in capacity.

In the pursuit of this vision of the human condition, liberals in the mid-19th century laid emphasis on the wider distribution of the franchise (as in Britain) or the direct election of legislators (as in the United States). The liberals believed that these institutional measures would themselves produce a welcome broadening of access to goods, services, and status.

Indeed, the British liberal intention in those days was to loosen land-tenure laws, to eliminate restrictions on the franchise, and to reduce import duties. To "liberalize" matters meant to reduce the role of government in economic affairs, allowing naturally beneficent forces to exert themselves.

In the United States, the liberal position included, as well, attacks on restrictions which were not governmental in nature, such as the great monopolies which emerged in the late 19th century. But the liberal aim remained the removal of institutional impediments so that the natural forces of man and nature could work their magic in providing a fairer share of material wealth and education to all who could take advantage of them.

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In the United States, this position did not really change until Franklin Roosevelt's election. By the 30's, something had gone so wrong in economic affairs that it was difficult to believe that the mere removal of restrictions could set them right again. In the name of liberalism, therefore, Roosevelt treated the legislative process and the courts with a contempt which could scarcely be equated with the traditional liberal respect for these institutional guardians of popular rights. What emerged, however, was the clear willingness of those who clung to the liberal faith in the bounty of the earth to accept unaccustomed restrictions, and now to decry attitudes that previously had been regarded as truly liberating. "Rugged individualism" became a deprecatory term; the major uncertainty about liberal policy in action was how far liberals would go in accepting the loss of political freedoms that had been central to the 19th-century liberal credo.

Some, who continued to think of themselves as liberal, were quite prepared for the abrogation of many human rights (overseas, at any rate), so long as the abrogation was carried on in the name of spreading more widely the benefits of wealth and education.

THE present period has dissolved the meaning of the term liberal which emerged in the 30's. For a number of complex reasons, liberals have now begun to doubt that nature does, in fact, provide enough to go around. They have begun to question whether "temporary historical accidents" are a sufficient explanation for the lagging development of the Third World; and these doubts lead to the third and most crucial doubt of all—the doubt that men are actually nearly equal, which brings on a suspicion that equality must be forced on them.

For their part, conservatives, who always define their ground by opposing the changes others advocate, have had to reverse all their earlier views. While once they believed in a limited natural bounty (which would be destroyed by imprudent equality), now they are forced by the logic of opposition to plead the case for limitless resources; in place of their doubts about human equality, they are now beginning to preach that men, if left alone, will achieve equality. Only, please leave them alone.

While these new definitions remain inchoate, the words liberal and conservative have lost much of their usefulness. But they will emerge again, with quite specific meanings. Liberals will be those who are prepared to impose "objective equality" on everyone, by quota if necessary, within the limits of a parliamentary system. How equality is to be achieved will remain a somewhat vague question, but equality itself will become the aim of liberal policy.

Does this matter, that such a rigid system will be called liberal? Primarily it matters to sticklers for precision in terms. Beyond that, the change will matter to those for whom the emergence of the original generous liberal spirit, despite all its dangers in which we have been so well instructed, marked a major milestone in the Western world's political development.

ROGER STARR, *who will soon be leaving his post as administrator of New York City's Housing and Development Administration to take up a teaching position at NYU, is the author of* Housing and the Money Market.

Gus Tyler: The meaning of liberal and conservative—like the meaning of good and evil—varies with time and place. But that does not mean that the words are meaningless.

"Good or evil—you cannot build your life apart from this distinction," insists Solzhenitsyn. Likewise, liberal or conservative—you cannot live politically apart from this distinction.

The liberalism that some of us hold dear emerged from the economic crisis of the 30's primarily as an economic philosophy, calling upon government, mainly federal government, to play an active role in restoring employment and lifting living standards. This was to be accomplished primarily by expanding aggregate demand: higher wages, unemployment insurance, social security, and government spending for social purposes.

A concomitant political goal was to give a greater voice to the people: unions to "democratize" industry, extended suffrage, one-man/one-vote, minority rights.

The secular theology was the image of man as "free and equal." Free in the sense that a person is endowed with certain inalienable rights; equal in the sense that no person is lesser because of the accident of birth or the vagaries of fortune.

Liberalism understands that freedom is not anarchy and that equal rights are not necessarily equal rewards. But liberalism also posits that the top-heavy accumulation of wealth (and the political power that goes with wealth) is a threat to the internal peace and freedom of a society. Hence, liberalism seeks a redistribution of income not only to ease life for the poor but to avoid both economic and political tyranny.

Although these propositions sound almost boringly commonplace, they are not universally accepted truths—as I can testify from a half-century of confrontation with conservatives on all of these issues.

DURING the Kennedy-Johnson years a new definition of liberalism began to emerge. The economic emphasis was lessened—primarily because it was assumed that America was in an age of affluence, a notion that came easily to upper-

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income devotees of the new liberalism. The old "class" struggle was overshadowed by a "generational" struggle in which the anti-establishment young redefined both the establishment and liberalism.

For a while, after Michael Harrington's rediscovery of poverty, it appeared that the focus would return to economics. But because this insight coincided with the black uprising, the war against poverty was perverted into a war against "white" privilege. In a backlash, many white liberals began to reject a liberalism that smacked more of a race war than a class war.

Liberalism was further redefined during the Vietnam conflict. By a new test, doves were liberals and hawks were conservatives. This put a huge chunk of the old Rooseveltians in the right-wing camp, since many of them in their continuing war against Communism and isolationism were principled cold warriors.

As the generational struggle deepened, there developed a fairly widespread counterculture that defined Left and Right in terms of hair, homosexuality, pornography, abortion, amnesty, drug use, open classrooms, and empty education. Politics was determined by "life style."

Part of this trend was the devotion to living with less in order to preserve the planet against depletion. No-growth became the measure of progress.

By now, neoliberalism found itself at loggerheads with the working class. No-growth is no good for the wage and salaried employee for whom such a policy means living with less at a time when he is already living with too little. The recession years of Nixon-Ford made it painfully clear that no-growth is a no-no.

As for the invitation to bohemia, the American worker—like his counterpart everywhere, including Russia and China—prefers the traditional way of life, insisting upon the certainties of job, income, good kids, nice neighborhood, solid school. Since the average worker cannot—like lumpens—find refuge in the lower depths, or—like the jet set—in a flight to faraway lands, he clings tenaciously to his turf, to the trinity of family, flag, and faith.

By 1972, many of these workers turned against the liberals as liberalism was momentarily defined by hot-shot young journalists hot for a hairy story. Such turned-off workers were joined by some old liberal intellectuals who, repelled and even frightened by the countercultural elitism of the New Left, developed a neoconservatism dedicated to an elegant apologia for the status quo and even ante.

This New Right—like the New Left—put aside the "class struggle" to engage in ideological fisticuffs over fundamentally non-economic matters like war and peace, sex and family, education and aesthetics. In 1972, some of these Old Left neoconservatives opted for Nixon.

The election of Nixon—thanks to the rifts in Democratic ranks brought on by the "newniks" of Left and Right—may, however, prove to be an unintended boon for the rebirth of American liberalism. Nixon has restored the primacy of the economic question. He has also reidentified his party with unemployment—this time, a very special kind of manufactured unemployment embellished with inflation. That certainly must leave a mark on New Leftists who could not see the difference between Humphrey and Nixon.

Nixon also made a mockery of his own avowed anti-Communism, with his unilateral withdrawal from Vietnam, with détente, and with his inexplicable rendezvous with Mao. That certainly must leave a mark on those New Rightists who saw a decisive difference between Nixon and McGovern in foreign policy.

The damage that the Republicans have done both to our internal and international strength should unite both the New Left and the New Right in actively opposing the GOP. In addition, other divisions within Democratic ranks are likely to be lessened. The brouhaha over "life styles" is presently a faint echo of what it was four years ago—not because the issues have died but because the combatants are older and because how you make a living has become more important than how you live it up. The debate over growth/no growth has lost some of its apocalyptic quality as we find ways to grow by recovering and replenishing threatened resources.

Out of these developments a definition of liberalism is reemerging—a definition that some will see as conservative in that it conserves the essence and spirit of the Rooseveltian resolves.

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R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.: Am I satisfied with the way the terms liberal and conservative, or Left and Right, are used today? No, but then I am an American, not a Frenchman; and I doubt that these terms have ever been very apposite to the American experience. Whether they have or not is a large and intriguing question, but it is one that I shall gingerly pass over to the learned doctors in this symposium. They can expatiate upon it with greater authority and perspicacity, while I merely register my disrelish for the terms as they are used.

I do not think many politicians or even many intellectuals are very serious when they use these terms. If they were, I cannot believe that they would ever have allowed them to become so utterly confused. Partisan usage of these terms de-

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graded them, and cavalier usage has brought them to their present flummoxed condition. For now, the situation is beyond repair. Was Richard Nixon a conservative in 1968, and how liberal or conservative was Lyndon Johnson's bequest to that election? The answers depend on how you value the terms and on how you value the candidates. According to the wisdom of the times it was a mark of the candidates' political savvy that neither consistently thumped for either term. There has been a studied degradation of these terms in American political discourse, and never was it more brazenly acknowledged than when the Nixon administration's resident political philosopher, John Mitchell, declared, "Don't watch what we say; watch what we do." Amen, and what the hell!

As I see it, a large element of opportunism has inhered in the way Americans have used the terms liberal and conservative, and this opportunism goes back a long way. To the intellectual, liberal was a veritable encomium and conservative, a malediction; commercial interests—victimized again by academic ideas—accepted the distinctions while reversing the connotations. Admittedly some serious minds attempted to give the words definite and dispassionate meaning, only to have their work incinerated by the profound turmoil of the last decade. Among the liberals, civil war broke out anew. The battle lines of the late 40's were redrawn as the resurgent forces of Henry Wallace blasted the other liberals over Vietnam, an internationalist foreign policy, and the careful balance such liberals had always struck between freedom and equality and between practical politics and romantic adventure. The Wallaceites made a furious fight of it, and as the struggles continued, both those opportunists intent on profoundly rearranging American society and those opportunists merely desirous of maintaining power began a fast shuffle with the terms liberal and conservative. They experimented with other terms like New Left, radical, and populist. And they became ever so Pickwickian in their usage of the words conservative and moderate. Tirelessly they tested these terms, forever adjusting their evocative ingredients so as to create a new political aphrodisiac; but all they managed was greater confusion. That confusion continues into this day, and so, a pox on all of it. I have not the magic to confer terminological precision on their pother, and I doubt anyone else does . . . at least for the present.

In the meantime there are serious political issues to be settled, and I suggest that the only way to get on with settling those issues is to reach for one of the few useful bits of political wisdom offered during the last decade. For the time being I suggest we resort to benign neglect. To fret about one's reputed degree of conservatism or liberalism is to practice a kind of pedantry or sectarianism that is onanistic in light of the serious issues of the day. The defense of an internationalist foreign policy, of American constitutional democracy at home, and of Western culture are matters that must be addressed, and to neglect ideological distinctions that are today chaotic but nonetheless divisive and immobilizing because of their cultural heritage is not to reveal oneself as philosophically frivolous but rather as deeply serious about deeply serious matters. With different ends in mind and via different paths of logic many erstwhile liberals and erstwhile conservatives now want America to withdraw from the parlous arena of international relations, many of these same people cannot abide the untidiness of a free democratic society, and some obviously hold culture in contempt. The questions raised are critical and relatively new. Those who would argue affirmatively for an active American foreign policy, a democratic polity balancing freedom with equality, and the maintenance of high culture have a great deal in common regardless of what they think of Franklin Roosevelt.

R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR., *is the editor of the* Alternative.

Ernest van den Haag: Clear use can, but actual usage cannot, be legislated. Unfortunately, the words conservative or Right, liberal or Left, are used ambiguously enough now to confuse supporters and opponents of policies and politicians.

Conservatives used to stress hierarchy, the authority of institutions, tradition, experience, and the obligations of individuals. They were more interested in the local or national good than in universal abstractions such as humanity, and thought of religion and of moral principles as permanent and independent of utility. Liberals stressed equality and the rights of individuals; they often were rationalists and utilitarians and in favor of change and experiment. Although they thought of man as the measure of all things, liberals finally came to regard him more as a product than as a producer of social and psychological forces, and thus not fully responsible for his conduct, particularly when "underprivileged." Liberals often appear to believe that powerlessness makes right (an idea more generous than true); conservatives often behave as though power does (a belief neither generous nor true, but usually expedient).

As power passed from conservative into liberal hands, some switches took place: conservatives came to oppose authority (now liberal big government) and liberals to uphold it; conservatives also came to champion the right of individuals against coercion by (liberal) institutions. Where private industry is concerned, liberals now want to re-

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strain growth, to conserve resources, to avoid the new, to restrict consumer sovereignty, collectivize decisions, and expand the domain of government. Conservatives remain or became expansionists for private industry, and now want to restrict government and enlarge individual rights. Thus conservatives have a tradition to uphold. It is the one liberals have abandoned: market freedom. Liberals *de facto* at least occupy the position conservatives evacuated: governmental control of individual and market decisions. Liberals originally favored a free market for goods and ideas. They still favor it for ideas, but have turned against the free market for goods, so much so that, for the sake of replacing it by central planning (allocation of goods, services, and income by the government), they will deemphasize restrictions on the free market for ideas (in left-wing dictatorships). Conservatives now have become interested in a free market for goods. They will support a free market for ideas where it has been abolished (in left-wing dictatorships); but they may overlook its absence where the market for goods remains free (right-wing dictatorships).

OBVIOUSLY both liberals and conservatives have kept few of their original positions. But some of the main attitudes—and difficulties—have remained. American conservatives have always found it difficult to uphold American tradition, for the main American tradition is change, the non-conservative belief that the new is better, that science can ultimately solve all problems. Conservative anti-utopianism may be realistic, but it is not optimistic enough to be popular; it goes against the historical American gain. Optimistic liberal rationalism faces a different difficulty: it is demonstrably wrong and, when given its head, produces disaster.

We live by symbols and transferences. The conservative as well as the liberal attitude involves thinly and not quite coherently rationalized identifications. Liberals appear to identify with the powerless child who has but longings and wishful ideas to offer; conservatives with the powerful parent who has experience and authority. Thus conservatives favor historical or symbolic powerholders (policemen, males, adults, whites, industrialists), liberals, those perceived as underdogs (criminals, relief recipients, blacks, women, children, workers). Parents are hated, at best patronized, in a child-centered country. Conservatives may be more realistic but realism has never been popular: people vote for desires rather than possibilities.

A conservative mother might tell her helper: "Go into the garden, see what the children are doing, and stop them from doing it." A liberal mother might say: "See what the children are doing and help them do it." Liberals never cease helping, even when it destroys the garden. Conservatives never cease trying to stop them. I think they are more often right than not, but it does not get them anywhere.

ERNEST VAN DEN HAAG, *a psychoanalyst, teaches social philosophy at New York University and at the New School. His most recent book is* Punishing Criminals.

Ben J. Wattenberg: The biggest split between "rad-libs" and "trad-libs" has concerned foreign policy.

Their side says America has often been a malevolent presence around the world, supporting right-wing dictatorships from Franco to Pinochet to Park. Because our influence has so frequently been malevolent, they say, we ought to butt out, and reducing the bloated defense budget is the best way to start. What we ought to do, to use their phrase, is "reorder our priorities."

Our side says that what their side says is, or leads to, neoisolationism. For all its flaws, we say, America is still the best there is. Accordingly, if we want our own freedoms to survive, we'd better stay involved in the affairs of the world. Freedom cannot survive as an isolated phenomenon in one rich nation. It either survives throughout a far-flung liberty coalition, or it doesn't survive at all. It is seriously threatened today only from behind the Iron Curtain. So we'd better know our adversary, be strong, and work for our survival.

An important question before the house is whether these two warring branches of liberalism can come together again.

And the answer, like so many answers in politics is: maybe.

The answer is maybe only because today both of the above positions—for the first time in a long time—can be described without the buzz-word of the decade: Vietnam.

The fact that Vietnam is really over was probably the central fact of the 1976 primary elections. When Senator Henry Jackson won the Massachussetts primary in March, that was the theme that both of the Boston *Globe*'s leading political columnists chose to feature in their morning-after punditry.

The fact that Vietnam is over was surely the central fact behind the amity that was apparent in June during the private deliberations of the fifteen-man drafting subcommittee of the Platform Committee of the Democratic party. It was only amity, not rapture, but given recent history in our party, amity is rapturous.

In a not-so-smoky room at the Mayflower, hardliners like Daniel P. Moynihan and mythic doves like Sam Brown were set to square off in a battle royal over foreign policy. Jackson-persons like myself warily eyed Congresswoman Yvonne Burke of California, also of a dovish persuasion.

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And the big story was that there wasn't much to fight about. Brown, the peace marcher now treasurer of Colorado, proposed language restricting aid to nations engaging in torture and other horrors. Moynihan amended the language so that it applied to the Soviet Union as well as Chile, and it emerged as the "Brown-Moynihan" plank. Moynihan asked for a certain additional specificity on moving the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and no one disagreed. Mrs. Burke proposed a cut-off of U.S. tax credits to corporations that encourage apartheid in South Africa, and Moynihan was happy to agree. Later, at the public meeting of the full platform committee, the Jackson forces proposed an amendment that in one paragraph endorsed the Jackson Amendment, the Moynihan UN proposal on amnesty for political prisoners, the encouragement of a free press and a free labor movement. That amendment was seconded from the floor by . . . Sam Brown.

All this is not to say that there was no squabbling. Bella Abzug and former Senator Joseph Clark fought some typically losing battles. So did the Wallace delegates.

But most of the discussion centered around that most delicious political issue: the defense of freedom not-counting-Vietnam-which-is-a-special-case. And that *is* an issue, at least theoretically, that the labor liberals and the New Politics liberals can coalesce around. All one has to be is for freedom, in South Africa *and* the Soviet Union, in South Korea *and* Poland. If that thought grows and develops, which is now possible, then COMMENTARY will not have to hold a symposium about the career of the word liberal. Its track will have been clear —and circular. And some President will give an inaugural address that says we are prepared to pay almost any price and oppose almost any foe to assure the survival of liberty. And all the liberals will applaud.

BEN J. WATTENBERG *is co-chairman of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority and the author of* The Real America *and (with Richard Scammon)* The Real Majority.

Paul H. Weaver: 1. All these terms are grotesquely misused today, as becomes obvious the minute one considers what, in the context of the Western tradition, they actually mean—and it is only in that context that they mean anything.

The Left is the party of socialism; it stands for equality, fraternity, and scientific reason. The Right is the party of the *ancien régime;* its commitments are to hierarchy, nation, and church. Liberalism is the party of freedom. Believing in natural right and the primacy of the individual, it opposes statism whether of the Right or the Left and argues for limited government, the rule of law, representative democracy, and economic growth. Conservative and radical refer not so much to regimes as to methods of political argument. Radicalism is preoccupied with abstract moral ideas and argues at all times in terms of them; it is a highly principled, doctrinal way of thinking politically. Conservatism begins not with doctrine but with circumstances and argues from the impressions they make; it is a "pragmatic" way of thinking.

Now consider what these terms stand for in contemporary discourse. What we call liberalism, to take the central case, bears a clear relationship to only one of these categories: conservatism. Modern "liberalism" is emphatically conservative, being committed to an intensely pragmatic approach in all matters and choosing to stigmatize as "extremist" all radical forms of political advocacy. Our liberalism may have begun as a conservative-liberal reaction to the rigid radical liberalism that prevailed in the U.S. around the turn of the century; today, it has long since become an incoherent and contradictory mishmash of conservative socialism, conservative liberalism, and conservative rightism.

Moreover, the Left and Right elements of this mishmash are pretty clearly in the ascendancy. As for the socialist elements, there are many, and they are prominent: the enthusiastic embrace of the Third World; the reluctance to maintain a vigorous ideological resistance to the Soviet Union in an age of détente; the enthusiasm for redistribution, racial quotas, and state provision of health services; and the obsessive desire to control business. The rightist elements are no less striking: the anti-bourgeois posture, the new enthusiasm for environmentalism and zero growth, the growing hostility to technology. Indeed, the entire "liberal" ethos is suffused with the nonchalant generosity, condescension, and contempt for the conventions of ordinary people that Aristotle said were the marks of "liberal gentlemen," i.e., of aristocrats. In this respect, surely it is telling that "liberal" views are increasingly characteristic of the upper class and of those who aspire to that status.

To be sure, there are points of agreement between modern "liberalism" and the real thing, but its resolute conservatism makes them surprisingly problematic. For instance, our latter-day "liberals" reject the notion of class, but not on the liberal principle that an individual ought to be treated as such; instead, they do so on the narrower ground that the ethnic group seems the more meaningful category. "Liberalism" also supports civil liberties, yet it defends them on the basis of pragmatic notions like the free marketplace of ideas, which justify such illiberal policies as government control of the content of

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broadcasting. Or take even the case of democracy itself: while "liberalism" does support it, it does not do so in the true liberal spirit. Thus, "liberals" today often urge the enactment of this or that policy on the ground that otherwise there will be violence; their rhetoric reveals a deep-seated contempt for public opinion; and they are generally quick to apologize for left-wing tyrannies around the world.

What we call conservatism is no less a mish-mash. It is primarily an alliance of radical liberalism and conservative rightism, with remnants of radical Right and conservative liberal thrown in for good measure. It seems held together primarily by its opposition to today's "liberalism."

2. The terms should be used in the sense I described at the beginning; that is, they should be used correctly. It isn't likely that they soon will be, of course; a person who considers himself a "liberal" would find it awkward to have to describe himself as a conservative-socialist-liberal-rightist. But that's precisely why I wish he would. For our real problem today isn't so much that we misuse the language, but that we think incoherently. Using the words correctly would force us to think more coherently and act more purposefully.

3. It matters enormously that we use the words so incorrectly and think so incoherently; the consequences of our continuing to do so indefinitely are bound to be tragic. For one thing, these terms embody no small part of the Western tradition itself. To drain them of their meaning is to alienate ourselves from our cultural heritage.

Moreover, the issues of our time—of liberty and equality, of the state and the individual, of wealth and community, of democracy and autocracy—cannot be grasped, let alone resolved, when the generality of people subscribe to bodies of opinion that are as blithely eclectic and mindlessly contradictory as our liberalism and (to a lesser extent) our conservatism. The recent "liberal" and "conservative" flip-flops on quotas, growth, and decentralization illustrate one of the consequences of this profound debility in our patterns of political thought.

DEMOCRACY presupposes that public decisions can be publicly arrived at through publicly agreed-upon procedures, and this in turn assumes that the people agree on who they are and what words and things mean. A certain minimum of radicalism is therefore necessary in any democracy, to fix and maintain those basic agreements and identities. Too much conservatism literally demoralizes a polity, dissolving the bonds of trust and legitimacy that make its politics something more than a process of organized rip-off and fraud. Our problem today—and it is especially the problem of what we call our "liberalism"—is the flood of conservatism that has washed us away from our moorings as a liberal society, and that is fast eroding the public meanings and values that make democracy possible. Today, what we call liberalism no longer defends liberal values, or even comprehends them, and what we call conservatism seems unable to conserve them. The time has come for a radical restatement of who we are and what difference it makes.

PAUL H. WEAVER *is an associate editor of* Fortune.

Suzanne Weaver: If the terms liberalism and conservatism are now so open for critical inspection, it is mainly because American liberalism in the past ten years has seemed to reverse itself on almost every major policy stance it brought with it out of the New Deal and World War II—or if not to reverse itself, at least to abandon that intense attachment that deems one's position on certain questions of public policy to be the touchstone of political faith. This particular kind of disarray is not badly symbolized by the appearance of a Democratic presidential candidate who has won his nomination without having to make many of those specific policy commitments that even four years ago would have been thought necessary to his victory. And not badly symbolized either by a Democratic platform whose drafting was marked chiefly not by how much it kept of recent liberal commitments but how much it felt free to jettison. These events have not come about as the end of political battles which a coherent liberalism fought and lost. They have happened instead with surprisingly little by way of resistance.

No surprise, then, that the term liberalism is said to have lost its power to explain anything much about American politics—and that conservatism has begun to lose its descriptive power too, as its policy positions are coopted by its rivals. In fact, probably the opposite is the case. It may well be that Vietnam, the domestic policies of the 60's, Watergate, and the reversals all these have precipitated have let us see for the first time in a long time what these political categories mean in this country. By far most important, liberalism has been shorn of much of its pretense to be a doctrine defined by the policies it promotes. In fact such a definition has not been accurate in this country during this century. But the speed of the recent changes gives us new evidence on this point, and an opportunity to describe the liberal impulse in a way that takes into account the recent policy vacillations.

Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., has said that an older doctrine of liberalism, the liberalism of Locke and Hobbes, encouraged certain freedoms that can easily war with one another. Most important, the founding doctrine stressed freedom of property and a certain freedom in ideas. The first is a free-

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dom to attach ourselves to things that are our own, that divide us from others; the second holds out the promise that such divisions can be transcended. The modern American variant of liberalism has been of the second party.

It has of course been something else as well in this country: it has been the vehicle for the assertion of equality. But though that assertion has often been vigorous, and not without its concrete results, it has been in the end of a secondary and limited kind. Modern American liberals have not in fact concentrated their energies on steps that might achieve equality of condition in this country. Instead, their egalitarianism has been of another sort—of the kind that wishes not so much to eliminate the material bases of political conflict as to assert that in the end, for the most important political purposes, these distinctions and conflicts don't matter.

Even before the founding of modern liberalism, there was yet an older definition of what was liberal: what was worthy of a free and leisured man of means, what was generous and unrestrained. And the modern American variant of liberalism has adopted something of that older meaning—wanting to be able to disregard those material things that separate us most incorrigibly from one another, and assuming that this disregard is an act of generosity toward others. Our liberalism has displayed at once a characteristic solicitude toward the poor *qua* poor and a characteristic discomfort with the language of economics.

It is an impulse that leaves our liberalism open to constant change—as each policy position it adopts proves to be a disappointment, as each one is shown to fall prey in its consequences to the encroachments of divisive material interests. One sees this disappointment first of all in the change that has overtaken liberal foreign policy, from an assertive and buoyant internationalism to the present withdrawals. The change has been much remarked upon, but it might also be said that it came not simply from the shock of discovering in Vietnam that we could lose a war, but from the realization that the America which liberals had defended internationally as the repository of the highest values shared by all mankind was in fact pursuing goals that the rest of the world did not much care about at all. It was found that we represented something partisan, something particular in the world; and this kind of partiality could not command our liberalism's moral passion.

So with domestic policy. The change has been from a commitment to centralized government and indifference to group distinctions to the opposite, to advocating group representation and flirting with decentralization schemes. Liberals had championed the older policies on the assumption that through them the distinctions among racial and ethnic groups would be of less public account, would cease to matter. They did not cease to matter. And so the search began again—not really for equality of condition, since the new schemes are so clearly unsuited to that goal, but for the kind of public representation that might persuade an outside observer that our inequalities are of minor importance.

Perhaps it is not even so surprising that important parts of the liberal movement are ready now to abandon the commitment to economic growth. It was a commitment that brought in its wake a measure of true equalization; but this kind of equality carried a threat rather than a sense of elevation. It glorified private things, and material things, rather than treating them as unworthy. And just as the American Left of the 60's grew out of a realization that this society was not going to support the high notions of self that liberals were bringing to it, the current embrace of the idea of material austerity seems yet another attempt to transcend the low politics of a materialistic life.

It is no bad thing for America to support a liberalism such as ours has become. It can promote a kind of public-spiritedness that is not excessively narrow, and it protects against the dangers of certain kinds of self-interest. Yet it also carries with it a characteristic disregard of what is concrete and ordinary, of consequences. There may be some use to us in our public decisions to know that this is so, and to have an idea of why.

SUZANNE WEAVER *teaches political science at Yale.*

James Q. Wilson: To label is to ignore. Once we have assigned a person to an ideological or political category, we need devote no further effort to understanding what he or she is saying; indeed, we can impute views where none may exist. Economists may applaud this process because it minimizes the costs of gathering information, but as a political scientist—and as an occasional labeler and a frequent labelee—I deplore it as a barrier to serious discourse.

Since I will be thought defensive if I object to the way the word conservative is used, let me instead complain of the misleading implications of liberal. In the 19th century, the term may have had a clear meaning: a liberal was someone who opposed state power over individual choices. Today, it has at least four meanings which, when not specified, lead to the wholly artificial discovery that liberals are "inconsistent" or that the "true" meaning of liberalism has been abandoned.

Liberalism may, in the first instance, refer to the doctrine that sets a high value—perhaps the highest value—on individual liberty. This usage has become sufficiently distinctive of late to produce a new term—libertarianism—to specify it. A

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libertarian will oppose legal restrictions on sexual preferences, political expression, drug consumption, and economic activity insofar as the behavior creates no external costs.

Second, liberalism may refer to the doctrine of social melioration under public auspices. A liberal is, under this theory, obliged to use governmental powers to reduce want, deprivation, and disease. The governing motive is benevolence: treating others in accordance with their presumed best interests. Since rational individuals cannot be expected to act benevolently at all times (the good produced by the *n*th benevolent person is likely to be small and will have no effect on that supplied by other persons), it requires public power—which is to say, coerced expenditures—if melioration is to occur routinely and on a large scale. Meliorists support Medicare, the minimum wage, anti-poverty programs, and criminal rehabilitation. They bristle at the suggestion that many of these programs do not work, or are too expensive; to fail to support well-intentioned efforts to correct social ills is to display a moral defect.

Third, liberals may seek to rationalize and moralize society. Their object is not melioration but reconstruction, and the motive is not benevolence but rationality. On a modest scale, the moralizers will wish to protect people from their own willfulness, by requiring them to wear seat belts while in their autos or crash helmets while on their motorcycles and by forbidding them to ingest, even knowingly, bad food or drugs. And where outright prohibition is impossible, substantial constraint is sought, as with barriers to cigarette smoking or restrictions on advertising. On a larger scale, moralizers prefer planning—over the use of land, the management of investment, or the determination of prices. At the most radical level, moralizers seek the substitution of a wholly planned economic order for a free one. Public claims should always be preferred to private ones. Self-seeking motives are not wrong because they occasionally produce bad results (as the meliorists complain), but because self-regarding behavior is intrinsically wrong. (Moralizers have great difficulty explaining why those who operate public institutions will be less self-regarding than those who operate private ones.)

Fourth, liberals may empathize with the lot of a particular disadvantaged group. The empathizers, unlike the meliorists, are concerned not merely with the objective condition of a needy group but vicariously identify with that group, and, unlike the moralizers, they have no larger criterion by which to judge the behavior of the preferred group than the group's own tastes. An empathizer will urge integration and equal opportunity when the spokesmen of blacks or other minorities seek this; he will support separation and ethnic power when new spokesmen arise favoring that; he will argue for quotas and equality (or even superiority) of condition when these policies are in vogue. (Empathy may also exist in a negative form—a strong aversion to a group, such as big business, or labor unions, or the military. The logic of the particular position is exactly the same in reverse: whatever the group seeks is denied, whatever constraints can be imposed are endorsed.)

THE fact that a given individual, especially a politician, may simultaneously embrace two or more of these elements of liberalism should not obscure the fact that, at least since the New Deal, the fundamental political struggles in this country have been not between liberals and conservatives but among these competing versions of liberalism. Currently, the meliorists and the empathizers are on the defensive and the libertarians and the moralizers are in the ascendancy. We mistakenly call the result a "conservative" mood, when in fact the struggle is between the two aspects of liberalism that are the least conservative in that they are expressive of the most fully worked-out ideology and are, therefore, necessarily the most radical.

A modest and hesitant prediction: in the long run, the meliorists will dominate. Whatever the merits of their substantive policies, "doing good" on a piecemeal basis is the way to create and sustain the most broadly-based political coalitions and to attract, in the short run, the largest number of votes.

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Peter P. Witonski: The appellations liberal and conservative, in common with many other well-established ideological labels—including such hardy perennials as Tory, social democrat, fascist, and Communist—are *mots d'usage* that are, I fear, more easily invoked than defined. They are relative expressions that can best be perceived only when they are preceded by some adjectival reference to a particular time and place. Consequently, they do not easily lend themselves to the kind of facile categorization that is the stuff of modern political taxonomy—a fact, one hastens to add, that has not prevented them from being so categorized on numerous occasions. In the past, for example, they have been cavalierly employed, at one and the same time, both for purposes of flattery and anathematization; and zealous editorial writers have blithely appended them to a cacophonously diverse assortment of political personalities and tendencies. One is, therefore, never ever fully satisfied (at least from an intellectual point of view) with *any*

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of the popular definitions of these terms; one merely acquiesces in them.

In America today we have become so accustomed to the liberal *vs.* conservative paradigm that we often tend to forget that it is of a fairly recent vintage in this country. Liberalism and conservatism, for all their lack of intellectual precision —or, rather, *because* of their lack of precision— have become indispensable parts of our political vocabulary; but few Americans, I suspect, have a very clear idea of what they really represent. Our Founding Fathers (who have been variously described as being both liberal *and* conservative) never used the terms, and the political leaders of the 19th century considered them, when they considered them at all, to be European inventions, vaguely akin to Jacobinism and Toryism respectively, that possessed little relevance for the New World and its unique conditions. Unlike Europe, where the terms flourished during the 19th century, America had no tradition of feudalism and inherited privileges; on the American frontier *virtù* and liberty reigned, the commons prospered, and equality of opportunity allowed men freely to succeed or fail according to their talents. Our Founding Fathers, including both Jefferson and Hamilton, were all good Whigs.

The Whig interpretation of history still holds sway in this country, and most American politicians continue to aspire to the libertarianism of our Founding Fathers. What sets contemporary liberals apart from their conservative brothers is not so much ideology as methodology. Conservatives and liberals both believe in social justice and liberty, but they disagree strongly on the mechanics of achieving those ends. Contemporary liberals believe, with Hamilton, in an energetic government; conservatives continue to follow the Jeffersonian dictum, "That government governs best that governs least."

CONSERVATISM in America today is a reaction to the "revolutionary" reforms of the New Deal. Indeed, the great debate between liberalism and conservatism that continues to take place in this country today can be traced to the New Deal. Before the New Deal, as John Dewey noted in his *Liberalism and Social Action,* reforms had been made on a catch-as-catch-can basis. The Progressives of the early 20th century, Dewey observed, had dealt "now with this abuse and now with that without having a social goal based upon an inclusive plan." True reform, he declared, had to be predicated on a desire to reform, in its literal sense, "the institutional scheme of things." Dewey, along with many of his fellow Progressives, argued that the term liberal could better serve the needs of social democracy in America than socialism or progressivism. The liberalism of Adam Smith was, Dewey argued, out of date; the liberating goals of liberalism could be achieved in the 20th century "only by a reversal of the means to which early liberalism was committed." Franklin Roosevelt had already chucked the term progressive and taken up the title of liberal before the publication of Dewey's book, and the new terminology was quickly picked up by the press. Liberalism came to stand for the policies advanced by FDR and his political descendants.

Republican critics of the New Deal, however, continued to define liberalism in its 19th-century context. They were not anxious to surrender the term to the Democrats, and in order to distinguish themselves from the New Dealers, Republican leaders began calling themselves "true liberals," "old-fashioned liberals," and "classical liberals." "Every step of bureaucratizing of our country poisons the very roots of liberalism—that is, political equality, free speech, free assembly, and equality of opportunity," Herbert Hoover thundered. "Liberalism," he added, "is . . . a force proceeding from a deep realization that economic freedom cannot be sacrificed if political freedom is to be preserved." The liberalism of the New Deal, Hoover argued, was, if anything, anti-liberal; it was a "mixture of European ideas, flavored with a native predilection to get something for nothing." The American people, however—caught up in the midst of an economic crisis of vast proportions—were not particularly interested in the quibblings of Republican "liberals" like Hoover; but the Republican insistence on laying claim to the title of liberalism remained, nonetheless, a source of confusion for some years. In the early 30's, in order to set themselves apart from the Republican "liberals," the New Dealers began to label their critics on the Right as conservatives. It was the first widespread use of that term in American political history, and, much to the chagrin of Herbert Hoover, it stuck, and was taken up by the public.

Along with such terms as Tory, Whig, and even liberalism itself—all of which began their lives as insults—the term conservative was employed by the New Dealers in an unflattering sense, and it is not surprising that the politicians to whom it was applied resisted it. Indeed, throughout the New Deal, Fair Deal, and into the Eisenhower era, Republicans continued to shun the term. To the very end of his life, Robert Taft persisted in describing himself as a liberal, even when he was generally viewed, both in the press and by his Republican colleagues, as the personification of the American conservative politician. Ultimately, of course, the term conservative was accepted by the American Right (Barry Goldwater being the first major political figure to embrace the term) and transformed into a word that inspired a degree of pride and enthusiasm.

THE conservative and liberal *styles* have not changed very much since 1932, although we may be on the verge of another shift in terminology. In the wake of the New Frontier and the Great

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Society, liberalism is clearly no longer the attractive label it once was—a fact that may explain why, for example, Morris Udall preferred to call himself a progressive in the recent Democratic primaries—and the libertarian ideals of American conservatism have become more attractive than at any time since the beginning of the New Deal. Recently Jimmy Carter, a man who can clearly spot a political trend, declared, for example, that conservatism was no longer a bad word. "It used to be," he said, "that conservatism was identified with racism, with withdrawing from the fast-changing technological world, with callousness about one's fellow beings. That is no longer the case. Conservatism [today] means . . . pride in individuality, strengthening local governments, careful planning, not wasting money, tough management, a good delivery of services." Perhaps today's liberals will soon start calling themselves conservatives, and conservatives will return to the liberal label. In any event, like a good American, I will continue to acquiesce in whatever ideological terms our two main political traditions, aided by the *Zeitgeist*, decide to toss in my direction. However, like Friedrich von Hayek, I would prefer to be thought of as an Old Whig.

PETER P. WITONSKI *is the author of* The Wisdom of Conservatism *and* Gibbon for Moderns.

Tom Wolfe: One night in 1956 I was having dinner in New York at the home of an investment counselor, a man about sixty, when a terrific argument broke out at the table. It was over nuclear weaponry. The man's views, by 1956 standards, were conservative. His wife's were mildly liberal, and his daughter's were passionately liberal. I was a student at the time, and this seemed like serious stuff. As soon as I could get the old boy aside, I asked him about it. How was it, I said, that he was a conservative and yet both his wife and daughter were liberals? I worded it very gingerly, this business of his liberal womenfolk, figuring I was touching a bad nerve.

What looked strangely like a smile of satisfaction spread across his face.

"Wel-l-l-l-l-l-l-l," he said, as if giving me a bit of man-to-man instruction, "that's a womanly instinct."

He was *beaming!* A *bad nerve?* On the contrary—he was pleased that I had noticed! He'd have been offended if I had considered the females in his family conservatives! In his house—being a liberal was a quite proper ladylike posture!

Needless to say, I wrote this old crock off as a buffoon of the *Life with Father* cut. Yet his strange notion that political positions result from "instincts," not thought, was something I couldn't get out of my head.

Then I discovered he had some formidable support. In the first chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil,* which is called "Prejudices of Philosophers," I found Nietzsche saying that "the greater part of the conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly influenced by his instincts, and forced into definite channels. And behind all logic and its seeming sovereignty of movement, there are valuations, or to speak more plainly, physiological demands, for the maintenance of a definite mode of life." Freud was to come to the same conclusion in *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism.*

INSTINCTS, not thought! What could better describe the situation in our own times? True, there are still haves and have-nots in the United States who arrive at political positions out of practical economic considerations. But most people who make a business of using the words liberal and conservative come from out of that great American Middle Earth where neither riches nor poverty exerts much pressure—and the "instincts" have room to play. Someday, when the neurophysiologists are able to read the human heart like a gas meter, I think they will tell us the following: most people discover politics in adolescence. They immediately turn politics into a news-of-the-day morality play expressing their own private adolescent struggles—and are seldom able to change the cast or the plot later on. The main characters are *Myself,* the hero, and *My Opposite,* the enemy. The private struggle may have taken place in the family, the neighborhood, or in the hurly-burly of the schoolyard. Forever after, the most momentous national and international events are stuffed into the same turf. The most colossal antagonists and movements become merely stand-ins for *My Adolescent Self* and *My Adolescent Opposite.* If *My Opposite,* my natural enemy in adolescence, was the sort of person who seemed overly aggressive, brutish, and in love with power, I identify him with the "conservative" position. If *My Opposite,* my natural enemy in adolescence, seemed overly sensitive, soft, cerebral, and incapable of action, I identify him with the "liberal" position.

Since the play is frozen in adolescence, it leads to marvelous paradoxes later in life. We have the familiar figure of the man who as an adult pursues rational business goals in the most serious and successful way, becomes extraordinarily wealthy, even celebrated—and remains devotedly Left in his political views (a phenomenon sometimes known, if you will forgive the term, as radical chic). We also have the familiar figure of the man who as an adult barely scrapes along, lives a Low Rent life of drudgery, gets nowhere, sees the world pass him by—and remains devotedly Right in his political views (Archie Bunker).

Nor does it stop there. We are treated to such delights as the liberal who becomes infuriated

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about torture and political murder in Chile—and doesn't give a damn about the same thing on an infinitely, but *infinitely,* vaster scale in the Soviet Union. In the interest of logic, he can hardly condone the terror in the Soviet Union (or Cuba, North Korea, or Cambodia), of course; so he takes this tack: "Look, we already know about that, and it's been fully aired—so now let's get back to Chile." (Condemning the Soviet Union, Cuba, North Korea, or Cambodia gives too much pleasure to the enemy, *My Opposite!*) Likewise, we are treated to the conservative who becomes infuriated about "welfare cheats"—and really doesn't give a damn about waste, fraud, and scandal on an infinitely, but *infinitely,* vaster scale on the part of government contractors. In the interest of logic, he can hardly condone the corporate swindlers, of course; so he takes this tack: "Look, we already know about that, and it's been fully aired—so now let's get back to welfare fraud." (Condemning big business gives too much pleasure to my enemy, *My Opposite.*) That is why condemnation of the Soviet (Cuban, North Korean, Cambodian) concentration-camp system is today specifically a "conservative" position, and condemnation of price-fixing (or CIA or FBI invasions of privacy) is specifically a "liberal" position.

SINCE the whole business of conservative and liberal is adolescent, why not go straight to the source for the proper terminology? In many American high schools today the student bodies are divided into cliques known as the jocks and the freaks. The jocks include non-athletes, and girls as well as boys, although athletes (white athletes) are usually the great jock luminaries. The jocks usually stand for worldly success and the established values of the school. They run the major school organizations. The freaks include non-bohemians as well as "hippies," girls and boys, those with an artistic bent or a scholarly bent, those more interested in music than sports, and a great assortment of students who are, for whatever reason, non-jock (*My Opposite,* my enemy). I propose that henceforth all politicians, writers, and serious Americans substitute the words jock and freak for conservative and liberal. We would begin to read about "Bella Abzug, the West Side freak" and "James Buckley, the incumbent jock." Very nice! We would begin to see about how much the political tags of our time mean. Which is to say, rationally nothing, psychologically everything—My Ancient Opposite! My Childhood Enemy! O My Faithful Schoolyard Phantoms!

TOM WOLFE *is the author of* The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, The New Journalism, Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers, *and, most recently,* The Painted Word.

C. Vann Woodward: Rather more than the normal amount of confusion does indeed exist at present in the use and abuse of political taxonomy. That is the situation both at home and abroad, Left as well as Right of Center. And the Center no longer holds very well. Across the political spectrum as a whole, from infrared to ultraviolet, however, the more striking confusions would seem to prevail on the Left rather than on the Right and to be more prevalent abroad of late than at home. A glance at foreign confusions on the Left might serve to place in perspective current domestic confusions from Left to Right.

At the conference of European Communist parties in East Berlin last June the New York *Times* reported "29 speeches taking as many different stands on both fundamental ideology and practical political issues"—and no real debate. Preliminary debate in private had already repudiated such standard dogmas as "the dictatorship of the proletariat," the infallibility of Moscow, and Soviet dominance over foreign parties or interference in their countries' internal affairs. In the New Reformation there would seem to be as many Martin Luthers as there were national parties represented. Such goals and values as they professed in common sounded more like the Bill of Rights than the Communist Manifesto.

For the French Communists, Georges Marchais declared that "the socialism we want for our country, one that cannot be separated from freedom," included "freedom of thought and expression, of creation and publication, the freedom to demonstrate, to hold meetings, and to assemble, the freedom of movement within the country and abroad, the freedom of religion and the right to strike . . . the right of political parties to exist and carry out their activities, of the independence of the system of justice and the rejection of any official philosophy."

The Italian party, according to Enrico Berlinguer, is "fighting for a socialist society that has as its foundation the affirmation of the value of the individual and collective freedoms and their guarantee, the principles of secular, non-ideological nature of the state and its democratic organization, the plurality of political parties and the possibility of alternation of government majorities, the autonomy of the trade union, religious freedom, freedom of expression, of culture and the arts and sciences."

Hailing the "bourgeois freedoms" as indispensable, Santiago Carillo of Spain repudiated "our pope" and "our Vatican" along with the "inquisition" of the recent past. "We want Communists to be heretics," he declared. "When we become conservatives, we are no longer right." If conservatism is properly defined as orthodoxy, authoritarianism, and opposition to change, then Soviet Russia qualified as the new conservatism. The new radicalism, he said, consisted of reconciling free-

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dom with socialism. And the United States in lining up with Russia against the New Reformation joins the new Conservative International. Carillo found this all the more paradoxical because the United States had already achieved many New Reformation goals.

On the other hand, if the true Left is defined, as it traditionally has been, by the extent to which property is nationalized and the means of production are in the hands of the state, then Moscow and Peking clearly preempt the Left. With the two of them at each other's throats, however, it is hard to say which is to the Left of which. As between the pretensions of those two rival Romes of the East, and, further, as between the old radicalism defined by nationalized property and dictatorship and the new radicalism defined by the indispensability of freedom and democracy—chaos reigns supreme on the Left. Who is to say who is to the Left of whom?

IN OUR own country confusion in political terminology is virtually a trait of national character. But chaos has prevailed since the late 19th century when the conservatives of the new plutocracy were permitted to take over nearly the entire national vocabulary of ethical and idealistic concepts and turn it against the tradition of which it was born. Democracy was identified with capitalism, liberty with property, freedom with the uninhibited use of it, and equality with the opportunity for the accumulation of wealth. Eventually this perverted vocabulary was permitted to define the "free world"—subservient dictatorships, authoritarian regimes, and all—in the same terms.

Until the opponents of this perversion firmly reclaim our traditional ideals and concepts, repudiate their distortion and abuse, and convert them into social and humane uses, freedom is in danger in our own country. As a consequence, it is also in danger abroad. For the fate of freedom that is at stake in Europe and the rest of the world very much depends on the future of freedom in the United States. If freedom has a future, it may well be determined here.

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Dennis H. Wrong: Terms like liberal and conservative, and Left and Right, have acquired such diverse historical associations that it would be remarkable if they were always used in a consistent manner. All of them are heavily freighted with positive or negative sentiments, inducing partisans to use them prescriptively in an effort to distinguish "true" liberalism or conservatism, or the "real" Left or Right, from what they see as usurpations of the label. Moreover, it is *always* in the interests of democratic politicians to gravitate to the Center by blurring the neat distinctions made by ideologists and intellectuals, just as it is often the aim of the latter to expose the politicians' rhetorical ploys and reinstate the distinctions. I sense such an impulse behind COMMENTARY's questions.

Despite the inevitable misuses of the terms, it remains the case that much of modern democratic politics can be seen as a struggle between liberals and conservatives, or Left and Right. Politicians, especially American politicans with their preference for maneuvering in the capacious and ambiguous Center, are given to making apparently oxymoronic claims that they are "progressive conservatives," "liberal traditionalists," or "Tory socialists." Yet *some* conception of a Left-Right spectrum or a liberal-conservative polarity is indispensable and creeps back even when the familiar tainted terminology is renounced, if only because the dictum that "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" is especially applicable to political debate and the alignments it produces. Thus, to answer COMMENTARY's last question first, it matters how terms like liberal and conservative—and radical—are used. They are constitutive of political reality itself and, both as political actors and as analysts, we are compelled to define ourselves in relation to them.

Liberal-conservative and Left-Right have never been interchangeable distinctions in American political discourse, as COMMENTARY's questions seem to imply. The first derives from 19th-century British politics; the second, originally suggested by the seating arrangement of the first National Assembly at the time of the French Revolution, came to be favored in the following century by the rising socialist movement. In America, liberals and conservatives are seen as contestants in the main arena of party and electoral politics, whereas Left and Right are confined to smaller publics on the fringes—Marxist sectarians and Birchers, readers of *Dissent* and of *National Review*, the followers of Henry Wallace in 1948 and of George Wallace in 1968 and 1972. Of the four terms, liberal alone possesses some definite content, since the other three, except for indicating broadly different attitudes toward change, are definable only in relation to their opposites at any given time. Liberalism, of course, derives from "liberty" and affirms the widest possible extension of individual freedom from institutional authorities. In the 19th century, liberalism included advocacy of the economic freedoms of trade and enterprise and the term still retains Manchesterian overtones in much European political parlance.

In America, liberalism has since the New Deal acquired a social-democratic, collectivist tinge and

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one no longer hears opponents of the welfare state describe themselves as "Jeffersonian liberals." But even before the 30's, American liberals were for a more equal distribution of power, income, and status. There have been changes in the groups regarded as the most unjustly deprived and victimized by inequalities and the lack of full civil liberties, but liberals have continued to see unregulated capitalism, big business, or the corporations as their main political enemies and the federal government as the chief agency capable of reforming the society.

I APOLOGIZE for mentioning these banal truths and do so only to cast doubt on COMMENTARY's suggestion that there are peculiar discontinuities in the way conventional political labels are used today. As for the assertion that "many positions which used to be called liberal are now called conservative," each of the positions adduced to support this conclusion requires separate discussion.

Quota systems: Liberals are by no means united on the issue of affirmative-action quotas in education and employment. In the past liberals unanimously opposed quotas that discriminated in favor of those already privileged. Affirmative-action quotas, however, discriminate in favor of groups that were formerly excluded, which is why some liberals have supported them as a temporary means of overcoming the disabilities these groups still suffer as a result of past discrimination. Obviously, this difference between past and present quota system explains why some liberals appear to have changed their positions. Liberal critics of affirmative action fear that the new quotas will create vested group interests that will make them hard to eliminate even if they succeed in fully achieving their equalizing purpose, which is also widely doubted. Whether or not these fears are well-founded, only the advocacy of *permanent* quotas favoring particular groups regardless of whether they still suffer disabilities resulting from past exclusion would amount to a reversal of traditional liberal principles. In any case, disagreements on the complex issue of affirmative-action quotas have not become a crucial dividing line between liberals and non-liberals.

Economic growth: When was support for economic growth ever a specifically liberal position? Though the term is of recent vintage, eulogists of American capitalism have always extolled its productivity, from those whom Veblen called at the turn of the century "'votaries of the full dinner pail" to the oil companies in their institutional advertising today. Presumably, COMMENTARY is referring to the vociferous support for environmental protection and zero population growth by segments of the counterculture and the New Left, and some prominent liberal intellectuals and academics, that emerged rather suddenly a few years ago. It was indeed something of a novelty to find these causes, especially neo-Malthusianism, embraced so ardently by liberals and leftists. Conservation and conservatism, after all, literally mean the same thing, and the founders of the conservationist movement early in this century were patrician Republicans like Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, although they belonged to the anti-business wing of the party. Environmentalism, however, is congruent with liberal-Left ideology in that pollution can be seen as another evil to be blamed on the corporations.

High rates of economic growth, as has often been noted, dampen down the class struggle by reducing dissatisfaction over inequalities in distribution. This applies internationally to conflict between rich and poor countries as well as domestically. For just this reason, leftists have sometimes viewed economic growth with ambivalence. They have, accordingly, been receptive to ecological arguments against it, hoping that the end of growth will move the politics of redistribution to the top of the political agenda.

Yet opposition to economic growth hardly seems to be a salient liberal issue in 1976. The only major political figure identified with it is Governor Brown of California and his liberalism—partly for this very reason—has been widely questioned. Although it undoubtedly appeals to a vastly larger constituency than a decade ago, environmentalism is reverting to the status it occupied before the recent flurry of interest in it, of being a special issue marginal to the major liberal-conservative differences and drawing supporters from both camps in addition to the concerned specialists, bucolics, cranks, and monomaniacs it has always attracted.

One need be neither a liberal nor a conservative, however, and certainly not a believer in the dubious computer models of the Club of Rome, to be persuaded that there *are* real limits to growth. The great boom from the end of World War II to 1970, which was so effective a solvent to domestic class conflicts, is over. In the Third World, the road to economic development now appears far rockier than it looked even a decade ago. At the very least, growth approaching the scale of the recent past can only recur if it is guided by environmental concerns and corrections for what economists call external diseconomies that are technically feasible but economically costly. Constant pressure on the private sector is necessary to insure that these concerns and corrections are taken into account even though the sheer physical limits to growth have been grossly exaggerated by the doomsday prophets.

Big government: Of the presidential candidates who most loudly denounced big government in their campaigns this year, I have never heard anyone call Ford, Reagan, or Wallace a liberal. Carter and Brown, the two most successful candidates in the Democratic primaries, also stressed this theme, but the media almost universally described them as centrists rather than as liberals. Writers

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for the *Village Voice,* surely a trendy beacon on the Left, repeatedly attacked both men as conservatives masquerading as moderates. Come to think of it, the *Voice* also attacked COMMENTARY as the organ of a new "Right-Center" establishment. Is this perhaps the confusion of political categories that worries COMMENTARY?

Support for decentralization and opposition to big government has a respectable liberal-Left heritage if one goes back before the New Deal. Anarchism has always been a movement of the Left and was not without influence in America early in the present century. There was a pronounced anarchist strain in the student and youth movements of the 60's, which owed something to the late Paul Goodman, who often expressed his humanist-anarchist views in the pages of COMMENTARY in the early 60's. The revival on the Left of suspicion of large centralized bureaucracies and of support for small-scale democratic participation was a healthy development. But there was always the danger that such an outlook might be professed by wind-sniffing politicians to give a new face to conventional opposition to federal social policies. This has happened to some extent in the 70's. Yet one permanent achievement of the 60's may have been the weaning of liberals away from an almost automatic reliance on federal policies and huge bureaucracies as the agencies most likely to implement their values.

ONE cannot classify every position on every political issue along a single dimension. Particular views may acquire a liberal or conservative coloration because they are espoused for a time by groups which are predominantly liberal or conservative on other issues, but their marginality to, or even contradiction with, positions on these other issues eventually becomes apparent, creating cognitive dissonance in their supporters. The most important case in point is foreign policy, which COMMENTARY's questions fail to mention.

In a recent article, however, the editor of COMMENTARY, Norman Podhoretz, criticized what he saw as a revival of isolationism among liberals, pointing out that it represented a reversal of their interventionist outlook since the late 30's, just as the questions for the symposiasts suggest reversals on such domestic issues as quota systems, economic growth, and big government. The other day a colleague of mine voiced his distress that some Democrats—he meant supporters of Senator Jackson—were taking a "profoundly illiberal" attitude toward détente with the Soviet Union. I argued that there was nothing inherently liberal or illiberal about favoring or questioning détente. I would make the same argument against the different position of Mr. Podhoretz. As a matter of fact, isolationism is not only the traditional outlook but is in a real sense the "natural" posture of the Left, which defines itself by the priority it gives to domestic reforms implementing greater equality. Foreign-policy choices—war and peace, military spending, "entangling alliances"—have more than any other issues created the splits and factionalism for which the Left has always been so notorious.

I, too, fret and fume when I encounter, as I do fairly often, Left-liberal indifference to Communist totalitarianism. Much of it stems from the Left's instinctive resistance to the salience of foreign policy and the agencies, civil and military, that conduct it; some of it is a hangover from Vietnam. I think that COMMENTARY is also suffering a hangover from the late 60's. Watergate defused the right-wing reaction (or "backlash") to the excesses of that period, but it also, along with the later investigations of the CIA and the FBI, exposed the extravagance and irrelevance of doctrinaire anti-Americanism on the Left. We are in a new period, a moderately conservative one in that both domestic and international activism have been temporarily discredited in the eyes of much of the public. I don't see the late 70's and 80's as wildly promising, but they will at least be different from the recent past.

DENNIS H. WRONG *is professor of sociology at New York University and the author of* Population and Society *and the forthcoming* Skeptical Sociology.

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The Politics of Energy

THE POVERTY OF POWER: ENERGY AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS. By BARRY COMMONER. *Knopf. 314 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by BRUCE KOVNER

ARGUMENTS by environmentalists about public policy are often based on a line of reasoning which holds, first, that we are running out of natural resources, particularly fuels, and, second, that major government initiatives or basic political reforms are necessary to stave off consequent disaster. In his new book, *The Poverty of Power*, Barry Commoner, one of the nation's most respected environmentalists, departs significantly from this neo-Malthusian argument. Commoner argues that we are not in danger of running out of fuels such as oil and coal; on the contrary, we have a fifty to one hundred year supply of oil and a four to six hundred year supply of coal within the United States alone; furthermore, we are on the threshold of developing solar power as a source of clean and virtually limitless energy. Nevertheless, Commoner is not optimistic about the nation's capacity to solve its energy problems. He believes that we face a political and economic crisis of major proportions, a crisis arising from the intrinsic inability of capitalism to develop the energy resources needed for future generations.

Commoner bases his analysis of energy policy on a principle he calls "Second Law efficiency" (referring to the Second Law of Thermodynamics), a measure of how closely our actual consumption of energy for a given task corresponds to the minimum amount theoretically required. Some fuels, generally those that burn at low temperatures, are suited for "low-quality" work, like raising the temperature of water in a washing machine or heating a house. Other fuels, generally those that burn at high temperatures, are needed for performing mechanical work, like running an engine, but waste much of their available energy when used in "low-quality" work. In a world that respected Second Law efficiency, fuels would be carefully matched to the tasks to be performed and we would, according to Commoner, be able to conserve perhaps 55-60 per cent of the fuel resources now used to accomplish the same ends.

Some changes would be relatively simple to make, if perhaps inconvenient. For example, we could stop using electricity for space heating, a practice which wastes about two-thirds of the theoretically available energy used to create the heat. Other changes would be more far-reaching: Commoner would not use petrochemicals to make fertilizers because, he argues, natural methods of fertilization, such as the growing and plowing under of vetch (a plant high in nitrogen content), can achieve the same ends at one-seventh the energy expenditure. Still other changes would require major transformations in industrial organization and patterns of consumption. The plastics industry, with a few exceptions, is a bad bet for Commoner. Compared with natural materials, plastics are wasteful of energy resources; thus, in Commoner's view, the production of most plastics should be curtailed and natural materials substituted.

It would be possible, if one took Commoner's Second Law efficiency to its extreme, to argue that most tasks now performed by machines (and thus requiring fuels like oil or coal) should instead be performed by animals, human labor, or primitive machinery, which convert into work a higher proportion of the energy they consume than do more sophisticated processes. Commoner seems to recognize this when he argues that natural fertilization methods, including the use of a farm-fed horse instead of a tractor, could accomplish at virtually zero energy expenditure what now consumes thousands of units of energy in fuels and chemical fertilizers. Still, Commoner does not intend to do away with the industrial revolution—he concedes that using a horse rather than a tractor would be "impractical." Yet it is hard to know where he would draw the line, or why.

The main issue, though, is not Commoner's thoughts about what we should or should not dispense with, but whether his concept of Second Law efficiency can tell us very much about an appropriate energy policy. Unfortunately, it cannot. It elevates one value—the preservation of energy resources—to the position of sole arbiter of economic and social organization. But clearly we value other things more highly. If we had the choice of running a ship on oil combustion or by slave gang, should we feel compelled to choose the slaves because they are more energy efficient? Similarly, if we have two fuels—the first "wasteful" of its theoretically available work-performing capacity but cheap, easy to use, and highly versatile, the second highly "efficient" in converting its stored energy into work but expensive, difficult to use, and less versatile—why must we necessarily choose the second? We value fuel for what it can provide, not as an end in itself. In any case, Commoner's paean to energy preservation would carry more weight if he did not also argue that we are on the threshold of a virtually limitless supply of clean energy. If we are indeed approaching such an age, it is hard to see why we should do more than encourage the development of these new and better sources of energy.

Energy-resources development is, in fact, the second major problem to which Commoner addresses himself. We now face, Commoner argues, a "capital crisis" in which American business will be unable to attract the capital needed to meet future demand, particularly the demand for energy. For evidence of such a "crisis," Commoner cites statements by the New York Stock Exchange, Chase Manhattan

BRUCE KOVNER *is currently at work on a study of pollution as a political issue.*

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Bank, and *Business Week*—a procedure akin to enlisting the testimony of labor leaders to prove that wages of union members are too low. Even so, the evidence does not offer ground for panic. The Stock Exchange, according to a study from which Commoner quotes, estimates that U.S. business will raise $4050 billion of the $4700 billion that it wants for capital improvements in the decade 1975-85—figures which would not spell crisis to most economists. Perhaps a clue to Commoner's alarm over these figures may be found in the vocabulary he uses. He talks of business's "need" for capital as if the market system would expire if it did not receive its full $4700 billion. But businessmen often want or "need" much more than they can get. Business must compete for scarce resources—this is part of the normal process of the economic system, not a sign of crisis.

Resources development is not the only area discussed by Commoner in which he reveals an ignorance of economics. Thus he sees the increasing labor productivity of capital-intensive industries (such as petrochemicals) as a sign of capitalism's tendency to deprive workers of their jobs rather than as a condition that makes possible higher wages and cheaper goods. He argues that *the* crisis of the American economy is one of capital formation, yet he rejects the idea of allowing price increases and higher profits, which would create more capital. To the argument that increased capital investments may require decreased consumption, he counters rhetorically:

> But suppose that the appeal were heard, and people consumed less. Who then would purchase industry's output, and generate sufficient sales to yield a profit large enough to feed the production system's growing demand for capital?

Commoner's rhetorical questions have a perfectly straightforward answer: decreased demand for consumer products would be made up by increased demand from capital investments, while the overall level of economic activity would remain the same. Commoner does not seem to understand that changes in investment and consumption, in profits and demand for capital, in prices and supply, are all normal, indeed inevitable, and that they are necessary components of an equilibrium of economic forces that allow a market system to function.

Although Commoner makes explicit his belief that capitalism cannot deal with energy development, he does not show how a socialist reorganization of the American economy (which he advocates) would do any better. Certainly the record of the socialist countries does not suggest a reluctance to use petrochemical fertilizers or plastics when these are available. Nor does their record on what Commoner calls the "crisis of environmental degradation" hold out any special hope. The limited evidence on the subject (such as Marshall I. Goldman's important work on pollution in the Soviet Union) suggests that pollution problems are no easier to solve under socialist regimes than under capitalist ones. Indeed, in some respects it is simpler to regulate private business than government agencies. The National Commission on Water Quality, for example, has found that in the years since the enactment of strict federal water-pollution controls, industrial polluters have been quicker than government polluters (like cities) to respond to pollution-control directives.

Commoner's confidence in a government-run economy is all the more curious since he is so obviously skeptical of the competence and good intentions of our own government. He spends several pages describing how he was denied access to documents favorable to the cause of solar energy; he recounts with obvious dismay the bureaucratic maneuvering that has kept the research budget for solar energy excessively low. It may be, as Commoner suggests, that the military and atomic-energy bureaucracies are behind this distortion of government policy. But the problem of bureaucratic politics is an inevitable one in government—and the Soviets and Chinese are afflicted by it no less than are the Americans.

There are a great many arguments for or against government control of the American economy, but Commoner has not seriously considered them. Nor, unfortunately, has he helped clarify the more limited, if extremely important, question of the shape of a rational energy policy under our existing economic institutions. In dispelling some of the exaggerated notions of fuel scarcity which cloud public debate, Commoner has performed a service. But in trying to write a tract about the underlying problems of capitalism, he has only added to the muddle of misconceptions about the economics and politics of energy.

Crime and Punishment

Punishing Criminals: Concerning a Very Old and Painful Question. By Ernest van den Haag. *Basic Books. 283 pp. $11.50.*

Reviewed by Jeffrey Marsh

While it is generally agreed that the continuing rapid increase in crime rates in recent years is an extremely disturbing phenomenon, there is wide disagreement about the causes of this trend and the ways in which it might be stemmed. The approach which has been followed by most liberal thinkers holds that while considerable improvement can be made in the mechanics of the criminal-justice system, any attack on crime which concentrates primarily on punishing offenders cannot ultimately be successful because the fundamental causes of crime are endemic to the structure of society, in particular to the substantial degree of inequality which still characterizes American society; according to this line of reasoning, any meaningful program to reduce crime must begin with an attack on inequality. This view is not reflected in public opinion, however, which in the main clings to the more traditional belief that the best way to cut down crime is to apprehend and punish more criminals than we currently do. This prescription is usually made on intuitive and commonsensical

Jeffrey Marsh *has written for* Commentary *and elsewhere on issues of public policy.*

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grounds, but Ernest van den Haag has argued the case in a more analytically rigorous fashion.

The thrust of van den Haag's book is that crime will always be with us, and that the judicious use of punishment is the only way to keep it within manageable bounds; his argument is that punishment is not only necessary but morally justified, and that the prevalence of doubt regarding society's absolute right to punish those who transgress its laws is one of the main factors contributing to the soaring rate of crime in modern American society.

Van den Haag begins by justifying the concept of punishment, which, he says, is often dismissed mistakenly as simple revenge. In fact, legal punishment does not merely sublimate the individual urge for retribution (which would otherwise emerge in extra-legal and socially disruptive forms) but also serves as an essential element of the social compact. Since internalized restraints can never be completely effective, there is a need for external sanctions, which in turn can only function effectively if they are carried out when the laws are disobeyed. Today, van den Haag argues in one of his major theses, the extremely low probability of a criminal's suffering punishment for any particular criminal act is one of the main factors behind the rapidly increasing crime rate. If this unwillingness or inability to punish crime persists, the currently law-abiding will also eventually cease to respect the law and a general social breakdown will ensue.

So far, the argument has been utilitarian: both the threat of punishment and its actual imposition are necessary for the sake of preserving order. Van den Haag continues with an exploration of some of the problems inherent in the use of punishment. In order for punishment to be acceptable, it must be compatible with the fundamental principle of justice, but justice itself is not the only value which society seeks to uphold. There are conflicts between the needs of justice and those of order: justice means that crimes of equal magnitude must be punished equally, but order demands more severe punishment for actions which have a greater negative impact on society at large, regardless of the intent or nature of the act itself. (Thus a sentry who sleeps on duty through no fault of his own may be subject to capital punishment because of the possible repercussions of his dereliction of duty.) There are also conflicts between justice and charity: some people are under much greater pressure than others to commit crimes, making it unduly harsh to punish the former as severely as the latter. Yet, as van den Haag points out, it is persons in the former category who are the more likely to commit crime, and with whom the law must be most concerned.

THE first part of the book concludes with a review of the functions of punishment, which include incapacitation, the rendering of a criminal incapable of carrying out criminal activities for some period; reform, which seeks to change the offender's future behavior (either by intimidation or by rehabilitation); and deterrence, whereby the punishment of offenders prevents others from emulating their criminal behavior. The second part of the book then surveys what is known about the causes of crime.

On the individual level, a person may be driven to a criminal act by internal or external causes. In the former case, his character is predisposed toward anti-social behavior, and a slight provocation may serve to tip the balance; in the latter, circumstances may be so pressing that only a saint could refrain from committing crime. Clearly, these are extreme cases, and every individual act is subject to a host of contingent circumstances.

One frequently mentioned cause of crime is poverty, yet, as van den Haag points out, this explanation will not do, since as poverty has decreased absolutely in this country, the crime rate has actually increased. (The extremely elastic concept of relative deprivation has been pressed into service to explain this anomaly.) Another opinion holds that crime is a manifestation of disease. This position, argued by Ramsey Clark among others, is dismissed by van den Haag as un-

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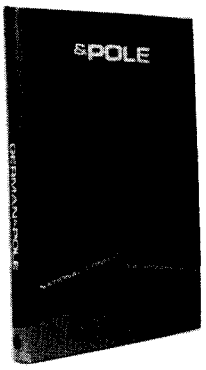
tenable, given the continuous spectrum of human behavior ranging from the completely law-abiding to the pathologically anti-social, with most people in the middle and no observable difference (other than the behavior to be explained) between the marginal offender and his non-criminal counterpart. In fact, van den Haag states, the "criminals-are-sick" argument actually serves as a defense mechanism for its proponents. By distinguishing sharply between normal, law-abiding people and criminals, it removes moral opprobrium from the latter while at the same time allowing restrictions on their freedom as clinical treatment for their own good.

The final third of the book consists of an analysis of different forms of punishment, and suggests some new or neglected forms that might be of value in present-day American society. The first point made is that the primary purposes of punishment should be retribution and deterrence: if the offender is to be rehabilitated it has to be of his own will rather than by coercion. The fear or experience of punishment is logically distinct from rehabilitative treatment which may accompany or follow it. A rational amoral criminal will have no reason to seek rehabilitation if his criminal activity does not result in punishment. Further, the severity of punishment must match the gravity of the offense: if it is too harsh it will not be carried out, and if too lenient, it will not deter. With these general considerations in mind van den Haag describes a variety of types of punishment.

The way in which changing mores affect our attitudes toward punishment is brought out strikingly in a chapter on corporal punishment, the decline in the acceptability of which is ascribed by van den Haag to its identification with sexual abuse in the last two centuries, when a growing trend of depersonalization has accompanied an increasing emphasis on equality. His ensuing discussion of capital punishment is less psychologically oriented and more in the spirit of dispassionate analysis which characterizes the book as a whole; he finds that the arguments most often



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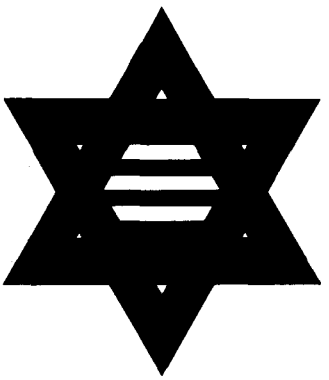

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used by abolitionists regarding the morality of capital punishment are flawed, while the empirical evidence, though inconclusive, tends to point to a deterrent effect.

The final subject investigated is imprisonment. In general, van den Haag maintains, the use of a much expanded arsenal of fines and appropriate monetary punishments is a desirable alternative to incapacitation when the offender does not present a physical danger or major moral affront to society as a whole. For conventional prisoners, van den Haag suggests that the structure of prison life be modeled on real life, with suitable incentives for socially desirable behavior and market wages (with deductions for room, board, and the literal paying off of debts to society and victims) for productive work. He then devotes considerable attention to one class of offenders which presents a special problem: those who have served the time appropriate to their particular offense, but remain so dangerous (i.e., potentially violent) that they should not be loose in society. In a truly radical proposal, van den Haag advocates a policy of "post-punishment incapacitation" for such cases. This preventive incapacitation need not, and should not, involve the stringencies of a confinement whose purpose is punitive.

In an epilogue van den Haag justifies the book as an attempt to come to grips with man as he is, with full responsibility for his actions. Since the evolution of society to date has not made man any closer to the angels, we are left with the need to suggest ways in which lawbreaking may be made less attractive. In *Punishing Criminals* he attacks this subject in an intellectually serious spirit, and even his most provocative and debatable suggestions are argued persuasively. Van den Haag refers repeatedly to the connection between the growing crime rate and the ever more prevalent disbelief in individual responsibility. One might wish he had discussed more fully the connection between that disbelief and the phenomenon of increasing prosperity brought about with decreasing effort. Is it because we have recently entered a period of economic struggle that we now see traditional values reasserting themselves?

One of the main domestic issues of the 1968 presidential election was the Warren Court's extension of the rights of accused and convicted criminals, and the remaking of the court majority under President Nixon resulted in a more restrictive attitude toward further expansion of these rights. Public approval of this attitude does not appear to have been affected by the fate of Nixon's general reputation, and indeed is consistent with the current espousal of traditional styles of morality, as reflected particularly in the political arena this year. We can, therefore, probably expect a further evolution of public policies in the direction advocated by van den Haag; whether morality itself will stay in fashion long enough for any results to become apparent is an open question.

Lions and Foxes

ISRAEL DIVIDED: IDEOLOGICAL POLITICS IN THE JEWISH STATE. By RAEL ISAAC. *Johns Hopkins. 227 pp. $10.95.*

Reviewed by JOSEPH SHATTAN

IN HER fine study of some of Israel's lesser-known political movements, Rael Isaac sheds much light on the singular character of Israeli politics. According to Dr. Isaac, the political consensus which began to take shape in Israel in the early 60's was undermined after the Six-Day War by the emergence of two very small, but highly vocal, extremist groups, the Land of Israel movement and the peace movement. Despite their structural differences—the Land of Israel movement is a tightly-knit pressure group, the peace movement a highly fragmented affair—Dr. Isaac contends that between them these two movements have elaborated a series of policy alternatives which are "not merely possible alternative ideologies but the only feasible alternatives."

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Dr. Isaac's use of the label "extremist" is a bit misleading. Within both the Land of Israel movement and the peace movement there are certain individuals and factions that may well be considered extremist, but on the whole both movements reflect attitudes that are fairly widespread throughout Israel. Nor is it entirely clear why Dr. Isaac insists on designating the two movements as alternative *ideologies*, since she is at pains to demonstrate how both have their roots in traditional Zionist orientations. Still, her general point—that the two movements in some sense represent Israel's policy alternatives—is well taken.

The Land of Israel movement has argued, with considerable logic, that the government's demand for "secure and agreed-upon boundaries" is a contradiction in terms. Since, in its view, the Arabs will never agree to any boundaries that Israel might consider even reasonably secure, it has urged the Israeli government to annex all the territory "liberated" in the Six-Day War. The peace movement, also with considerable logic, has argued that the Israeli government's call for "a just and lasting peace" is unrealistic. Since the Arabs cannot be expected to agree to a total relaxation of tensions with Israel, it has urged the government to return the occupied territories for something less than a full peace. After the October 1973 war, as Dr. Isaac demonstrates quite nicely, just as the ruling Labor party, by permitting private Israeli land purchases in Judea and Samaria, was about to give its tentative endorsement to some of the strategic conceptions of the Land of Israel movement, international pressure, in the substantial form of Henry Kissinger, intervened to force the government to accept the perspectives of the peace movement.

THE remarkable fact about the Land of Israel movement and the peace movement is that even while both groupings cordially depise one another, they represent equally legitimate interpretations of the Zionist tradition. The Land of Israel movement, which has included such highly popular Labor party stalwarts as Yitzhak Tabenkin and Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, as well as prominent Israeli writers like the late S. Y. Agnon and Natan Alterman, has drawn upon the revolutionary intransigence of traditional Zionism. What matters in international relations, these aged revolutionaries argue, is not the attitude of the great powers but the will of the Jewish people. For all its obvious quantitative deficiences, Israel can still impose its vision of history on events. The land liberated by the Israeli army in 1967 is part of the Jewish partrimony, it has been paid for in Israeli blood, and no government, under *any* circumstances, can surrender even an inch without doing grave harm to the essence of Zionism.

Initially, the Land of Israel movement argued that Israel needn't fear American displeasure, since there was no divergence between American and Israeli interests in the Middle East; on the contrary, the United States understood that it was in its own interest to have a strong Israel in the Middle East. As it became evident after 1974, however, that the State Department did not interpret American interests in the Middle East in quite the same way, the movement developed an interesting critique of Western society in general. Elaborated most systematically in Eliezer Livneh's *Israel and the Crisis of Western Civilization*, this critique asserts that the West is morally corrupt, affluent to the point of decadence, and inherently anti-Semitic. (Livneh's rejection of the West is similar, in many ways, to Solzhenitsyn's, except that it does not even hold out the *possibility* of salvation.) Whatever one may think of

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Livneh's analysis, it should be clear that the Land of Israel movement is no ordinary right-wing organization, and that its premises are far from conservative.

THE peace movement can also claim Zionist legitimacy for its stand. Ever since the days of Brit Shalom and the Ihud, there has always been a powerful faction in the Zionist movement arguing that the primary task is to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Arabs. How this is to be achieved, though, has always constituted a source of confusion and embarrassment. Some of the Zionist-Marxist parties, like Hashomer Hatzair, have denied that there is even a real basis to Arab anti-Zionism: early proponents of this view used to say that the Arabs were deluded by the propaganda of their feudal effendis into a sort of "false consciousness" which was bound to evaporate once Jewish and Arab workers set about the task of jointly building a socialist Palestine. The "false consciousness" argument reappeared in the Israeli peace movement in the late 60's, but this time groups like Siah and Matzpen were arguing that Israelis were the victims of "false consciousness," and that only after Israel had become "de-Zionized" (i.e., de-Judaized) could Jews and Arabs march in the vanguard of human progress.

More serious elements in the Israeli peace movement have nothing to do with the extreme Left, yet they too urge the government to make serious concessions to Palestinian nationalism. The problem is, what sort of concessions? Israel could set up, of its own initiative, a Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza strip, but that would hardly constitute much of a concession to Palestinian national self-determination, and the Israeli-sponsored state would probably be bitterly resented by the Palestinians themselves. Some in the peace movement have proposed that the government simply issue a declaration recognizing the validity of Palestinian nationalism, yet such a gesture, quite apart from its puerility, would only invite the great powers to pressure Israel into giving some tangible expression to Palestinian "rights."

While the peace movement does not know how to solve the "Palestine problem," it remains appalled by what it regards as Israel's increasingly "colonialist" character. Oddly enough, despite its "radical" premises, the peace movement favors returning to a condition that, by Israeli standards, might be considered normalcy. A Little Israel, in its view, enjoying hardly more than a *de facto* recognition (if even that) from its Arab neighbors, is morally and politically preferable to a Greater Israel lording it over a million non-Israeli Arabs.

IF THE Land of Israel movement consists largely of Israeli lions, the peace movement is made up of clever Israeli foxes. Unfortunately for everyone concerned, the foxes are not clever enough and the lions not strong enough to move the Arab-Israeli conflict off dead center. Dr. Isaac assures us that the arguments she renders with such painstaking detail (arguments which will undoubtedly find their way into the arsenal of Arab propaganda) ultimately have had a great impact on Israeli decision-makers, but in fact she may be overstressing their importance. Israeli diplomacy today remains essentially what it has been since the Six-Day War: Israel is prepared to accept the pre-1967 territorial status quo (apart from minor rectifications), but at the same time it seeks to achieve a revolutionary change in the Middle East—Arab acceptance of Israeli legitimacy.

Nowadays, it is the fashion both inside and outside Israel to criticize the Labor government for its lack of initiative and imagination. It certainly cannot be denied that the views of the Land of Israel movement, with which Dr. Isaac appears to sympathize, and those of the peace movement show a greater internal consistency than the diplomatic gropings and frequent vacillations of the government. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that in politics *how* one thinks is often far more important than *what* one thinks. Between 1967 and 1973 Israeli diplomacy tried to reconcile the conflicting demands of a powerful revolutionary tradition and an overwhelming desire for normalcy.

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In the end, it failed. Even so, the Israeli government did little it need apologize for. In this wicked world, that is quite an achievement.

The God That Failed?

WHY MARXISM? THE CONTINUING SUCCESS OF A FAILED THEORY. By ROBERT G. WESSON. *Basic Books. 281 pp. $12.95.*

Reviewed by VICTOR BARAS

IN THE *Decameron*, Boccaccio describes a Jew named Abraham who travels to Rome to examine at first hand the claims of Christianity. Finding corruption and debauchery rampant at the Papal Court, Abraham thereupon converts to Christianity, reasoning that if the Christian religion survives and prospers despite the efforts of the clergy to destroy it, it must have divine support.

A 20th-century Abraham would become a convert to Marxism. Marx's doctrine survives and prospers despite all that is done in its name. An apostle of liberation, Marx is invoked by admirers of Stalinist terror in Russia and nationwide forced labor in Cambodia, and Marxism has given the world more than a dozen regimes so repressive that their border defenses serve not to repel intruders but to imprison the native populace. Marx was a militant atheist; there are religious Marxists. Marx was virulently anti-Jewish; there are Zionist Marxists. Marx was relentlessly rationalistic; there are existentialist Marxists and Freudian Marxists. Marx advocated violent revolution; there are pacifist Marxists. Marx despised, above all else, the "bourgeois liberties" of parliamentary democracy; yet Western Europe is witnessing a boom in parliamentary Marxism.

Why? Is there in Marx's teaching some elusive core of truth, something like divine or historical support, that enables it to flourish? Or is Marxism merely a serviceable doctrine that happens to bring together many things that many people want to hear? The latter view is the correct one, according to Robert Wesson in *Why Marxism?* Wesson rejects the possibility that Marxism survives because Marx was right. Rather, Marxism prospers because it is what Marx himself called, pejoratively, an "ideology," a comforting and useful teaching that imposes a spurious rationality on an inhospitable world. That is, as someone once said, Marxism does not explain history, history explains Marxism. Wesson's answer to the question "Why Marxism?" consists of a patient and sharp-witted listing of the social, political, and psychological needs that Marxism, better than most doctrines, reconciles and satisfies.

THE decisive event in the history of Marxism was of course the Bolshevik revolution. Why did Marxism come to power in Russia? There is no easy explanation. There was, after all, a certain measure of accident in the fact that Lenin, the only man able to stage a successful coup against the Provisional Government in 1917, called himself a Marxist. Although Bolshevik strength was concentrated in Russia's cities, the revolution was hardly the proletarian uprising envisioned by Marx. Lenin's political genius consisted in his recognition of the importance of the conspiratorial party, his ability to exploit the war-weariness of Russia, and his thoroughly un-Marxist promise of land to the peasantry. None of this bears any obvious relationship to his professed Marxism, unless one sees the influence of Marx in Lenin's ruthlessness and opportunism. Nevertheless, Lenin made the revolution and won the civil war in the name of Marx, and there it stood.

Once Marxism became established as the state doctrine of the major enemy of the liberal West, it became immediately attractive to

VICTOR BARAS *teaches political science at the Graduate Faculty of the New School in New York.*

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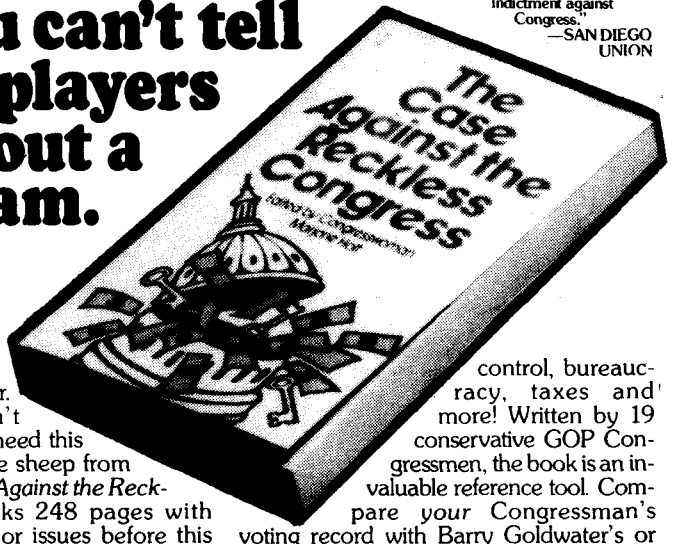

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anti-Westerners, especially Third World nationalists, and many Western intellectuals. Wesson observes that fascism and even Nazism briefly commanded the respect of some of the same people. It was thus doubly important that the USSR happened to participate in the global victory over Hitler (no thanks, incidentally, to Stalin's pre-war diplomacy). World War II gave Russia vastly enhanced power and respectability and consolidated the position of Marxism as the only anti-Western ideology supported by a powerful state.

Since 1945 Marxism has thus emerged as a nearly perfect vehicle for "anti-Western Westernizers," as Wesson calls the nominally leftist leaders of the Third World. For them Marxism justifies both the pursuit of Western technology and the rejection of Western-style politics. Marxism in the Third World shares the enduring appeal of any doctrine that teaches the poor that they are poor because the rich are rich. It attracts those who imagine that the abolition of poverty is as easy as the abolition of wealth.

In addition, Marxism has long appealed to intellectuals in the West. Intellectuals, like most people, are impressed by success and attracted by power. They are notoriously disinclined to share the political opinions of their less sophisticated countrymen. They have a tradition of softness toward benevolent tyranny. (Wesson recalls the admiration of Enlightenment *philosophes* for despotic China, about which they knew practically nothing.) Marxism offers the moral satisfaction of siding with "the people" without the distasteful need to consult them about their desires. Intellectuals may also be tempted by the prospect of inflicting their notion of reason on a recalcitrant humanity.

WESSON convincingly argues that Marxism has virtually cornered the modern market in ideologies. It is therefore a bit surprising to find that he thinks the heyday of Marxism is past. Noting that Marxist movements thrive on instability, particularly the instability born of war, Wesson paints a remarkably sanguine picture of the contemporary world. He points to Africa and the Middle East, among other places, as areas where there are no longer likely to be local conflicts giving rise to revolutionary situations; recent events suggest that this judgment may be premature. He also thinks that leftist regimes in the future will be less doctrinaire in their Marxism. Possibly so, but the success of Marxism in the past has never depended on the fidelity of Marxists to the master's teaching. No matter *what* Marxists did, they did it in the name of Marx.

In addition, Wesson cites the emergence of parliamentary Communism in Western Europe as proof that the revolutionary teaching is running out of steam. Yet, although it is certainly true that Marxist doctrine is becoming increasingly diffuse and domesticated, this is not the first time it has done so. As Wesson himself notes, the same could have been observed before 1914 and almost any time since.

Parliamentary reformism is, to be sure, the one kind of revisionism that has proved fatal to Marxism in the past; the West German Social Democratic party, for example, renounced Marxism in 1959 (that is, *before* the party entered the government). It is very much an open question whether the Communists of Italy, Spain, and France are headed in the same direction. Do they believe that the preservation of parliamentary democracy is *more* important than the achievement of Communism? And how will the new respectability of Communism affect non-Communist voters? Will their loyalty to parliamentary institutions be weakened or strengthened by the spectacle of Communists as coalition partners? Wesson's optimism notwithstanding, it is too early to tell whether the current round of Marxist revisionism will cause the doctrine to atrophy or, rather, give it yet another new lease on life.

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Abraham D. Sofaer, Columbia University School of Law
Foreword by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

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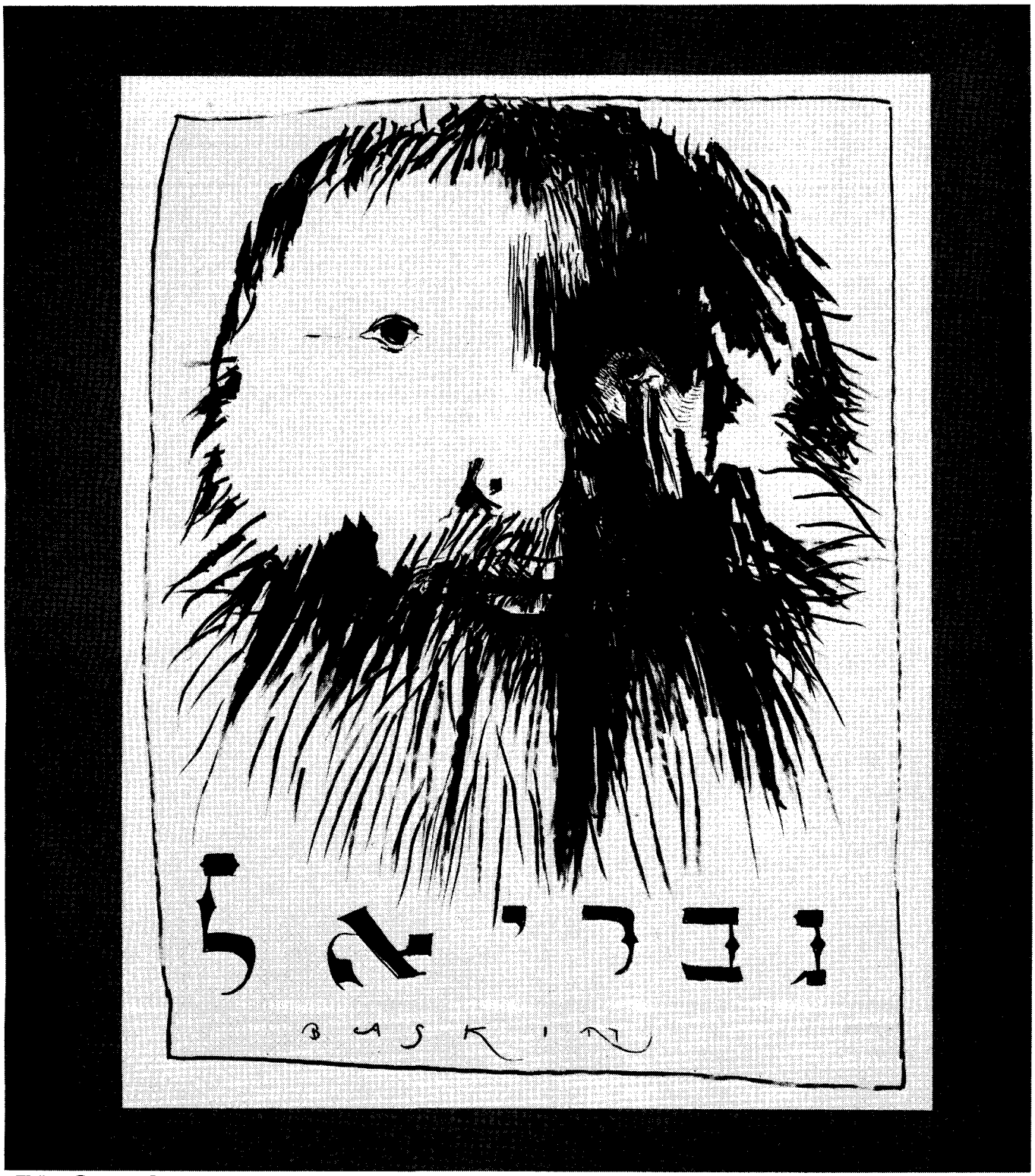

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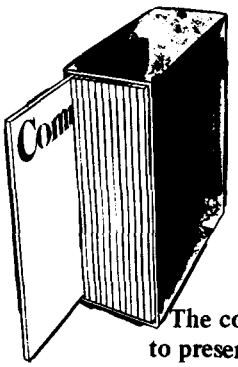

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—*Publishers Weekly*

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State of the Nation

THE EXPLORING SPIRIT: AMERICA AND THE WORLD THEN AND NOW. By DANIEL J. BOORSTIN. *Random House. 102 pp. $6.95.*

TODAY AND TOMORROW IN AMERICA. By MARTIN MAYER. *Harper & Row. 217 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by CHESTER E. FINN, JR.

BICENTENNIAL fever might be expected to infect writers and publishers along with everybody else, and this season may therefore see more than the usual number of slender hardbacks by thoughtful people who take the occasion not to unveil their latest research but rather to share with us their meditations on the state of the nation. Both these brief volumes are sober, lucid, flecked with insight, and pleasant to read. Each, as befits a bird's-eye view of America, got started across the Atlantic, Boorstin's as a series of lectures for the BBC in late 1975, Mayer's as a "highly irritated" essay while "more or less stranded" in a Geneva hostelry in early 1973. Beyond that they have little in common, save a dearer than usual price-per-word

Boorstin, who is now Librarian of Congress, looks back as a historian to the age of Columbus, chasing an animus he calls the "exploring spirit." He sharply distinguishes between the mere "discoverer" who tracks down something he knew would be there, and the "explorer" who thrusts himself into the unknown to see what it may hold. His point, of course, is that Americans have been true explorers and that "if the United States is to continue to play its catalytic role in the world, if it is to continue to stir mankind to the impossible, we must keep alive and socialize the exploring spirit."

For all its rhetorical uplift—the dust jacket calls it "refreshingly positive"—this book is more than a Fourth of July oration. Boorstin attempts to show how the pressure of high technology and the impulse to perfect democracy have altered the American context and made it harder to nurture the exploring spirit. He sketches, for example, the role that distance used to play—distance from the Old World, distance among our own communities—and the mixed blessings of a technology that has all but obliterated those spatial barriers while encapsulating individuals in their automobiles and television-dominated living rooms. Self-government got started on this continent because settlements were too remote for any other scheme to work. Our federal structure was the inescapable result of geographic sprawl and the heterogeneity of communities that, by the late 18th century, were accustomed to looking after their own affairs. Just as the gifts of high-speed transportation and instantaneous communication all but ended the discretion we once entrusted to our ambassadors—the Louisiana Purchase would likely never have been consummated if Monroe and Livingston had been able to cable their capital about Napoleon's sudden offer—so have they extended the reach of the national government and eroded the informal institutions which formerly held us together in reasonably amiable and secure social units.

The barriers of time have fallen, too, as technology has "enlarged our sense of the contemporary." Overwhelmed by what is happening today, as organized and edited on the evening news, we discard the past, lose perspective, and elevate television anchormen to the priesthood formerly comprised of "those who made the authentically new," those who chronicled the past and those who explored the future.

Boorstin worries that an infatuation with market research and the margins-of-error of modern social science is "boxing in" the future, that the educators' compulsion to teach only the "relevant" has a similar effect on the past, that our love affair with professionalism splinters the intellectual enterprise and rewards the discoverer at the cost of the true explorer. He is also deeply troubled by the "minority veto" that slams the door to honest inquiry in every realm that one interest group or another feels touchy about.

CHESTER E. FINN, JR., *is a research associate in the governmental studies program of the Brookings Institution.*

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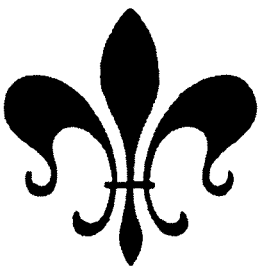
Yet rays of hope still shine. He salutes the press for refusing to be daunted in its zeal for exploration into every nook and cranny of contemporary life. He lauds the Congress for keeping our "messy surface" exposed to view and reminding us how much we do not really know for sure. He cherishes the "skeptical layman" as an antidote to public relations, overconfident technology, smug government officials, and exotic specialists. "However unwittingly," Boorstin believes, the ordinary citizen "has become the catalyst for the exploring spirit."

I am not absolutely certain that I know what this last means. The book has a shorthand quality that leaves the reader wishing for examples and nuance, something to redeem Boorstin's bald pronouncements from the realm of truism. Yet the book is likable. It is good to have as Librarian of Congress a man who can squeeze Ferdinand and Isabella, Will Rogers, and Senator Joseph McCarthy into two paragraphs, and it is healthy and stimulating to be able to read coherent reflections on the contemporary state of the nation that are grounded in five centuries of history. One need not share all Boorstin's worries or enthusiasms to like the way he thinks and writes.

MARTIN MAYER seldom transports his reader further back in history than World War II; in fact his volume focuses mainly on the 60's and 70's. It has a grumpy, stop-the-world tone, that of a grandfather dismayed by the younger generation, but it is neither wholly negative nor backward looking. Sprinkled with prescriptions and recommendations, *Today and Tomorrow in America* urges—though it does not succeed in describing—a reconceptualization of the ties between individual and government, between man and society.

Mayer has little use for planners and others who think they can control the future. Though he stops way short of Ayn Rand, he finds the marketplace generally a more satisfactory way of mediating conflict, responding to change, and harnessing individual energy than consigning man's fate to an army of technocrats. "Everything we do in-



Peasants into Frenchmen

The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914

Eugen Weber

In this lively, often witty, and always provocative study, Professor Weber shows that the nation we call France achieved national unity not under Louis XIV or Napoleon, as is commonly supposed, but only in the 1880's and 1890's, when the forces of modernization finally penetrated the French countryside. For more than a century after the Revolution, millions of peasants lived on as if in a timeless world, their existence little different from that of the generations before them. Their country was Cornouaille or Ardèche or Couserans, not some abstraction called France. They spoke no French, paid no heed to newfangled francs or meters, and felt ill at ease even in the small market towns. What little they knew of far-off cities they envied and distrusted. In short, they stood like so many distinctive peasant societies, stubbornly maintaining their particular cultures far into the nineteenth century. In his sweeping survey of the peasants' changing world, Weber traces what he sees as a veritable *crise de civilisation* that swept France in the early years of the Third Republic as traditional attitudes and practices crumbled. Local roads and railways were the decisive factors, bringing hitherto remote and inaccessible regions into contact with the markets and lifeways of the modern world. The products of industry rendered many peasant skills useless, and the expanding public school system taught not only the language of the dominant culture but its values as well, among them patriotism. By 1914 France had finally become *La Patrie* in fact as it had so long been in name. $20.00

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fluences our future; but nothing we can do will control it. Believing we can control the future, we grow unprepared for surprise, and we lack ideas about what to do next when the plans go wrong."

He dotes on examples of government-run-amok. The book begins with three: an "error of technique," the Clean Air Act of 1970, which tried to regulate pollution rather than put a price on it; an "error of social purpose," the attempt to foster ethnicity through bilingual education, which worsens inequality by making children "illiterate in two languages"; and an "error of analysis," the effort to mandate rapid rail transit in metropolitan areas, a vastly expensive and inflexible scheme that defies American behavioral and mobility patterns. All three errors, Mayer believes, "result from setting public policy athwart the trend lines of the society, seeking to block rather than to direct the desires of the people who will be affected."

What are the trend lines we should reckon with? The book offers a quartet of rather familiar ones—increasing wealth, fast-developing technology, the weakening of traditional institutions, and basic demographic shifts. If that were the end of it, one might yawn, conscious of the need to take account of such basic forces and the difficulty of doing so. What makes Mayer's analysis more arousing is his willingness to sketch new mechanisms for harnessing individual "greed" in the service of the commonwealth in ways that, he believes, cannot help but respond to such underlying trends. "Ideally," he suggests, "a highly developed capitalist society should generate structures of incentives that make price/cost signals responsive to needs that are determined politically as well as to needs that are determined by individual immediate choice." When those structures fail to arise spontaneously, "the highest function of government is to create them."

We are drawn, inexorably, to the tax system as the least coercive tool for shaping incentive structures. Mayer praises some extant deductions and exemptions, and damns others for their evil consequences, such as the economic reward that "separate returns" can yield to couples who simply live together rather than being married. Acknowledging that tax benefits and penalties invite manipulation by self-seeking sorts, he concedes that direct payments are sometimes preferable, but not always. A national "value-added tax" in the European mode, and a vastly increased tax on land would, if properly designed, afford government great flexibility in allocating subsidies and incentives without killing individual initiative and would, he is confident, also make it much easier to respond to economic cycles.

Flexibility is the key. We grant too much control, says Mayer, to public and private institutions that have no stake in the practical outcomes of their actions. When the schools control the training of the young, manpower needs get lost, too many formal credentials are required, and many people waste years preparing for jobs that do not exist or that have no intrinsic relationship to what they learned in the classroom. The way to achieve equal opportunity through education is not by shackling the schools with an endless chain of court orders and government regulations but by making it worthwhile for employers—paying them, if need be—to hire people who need jobs and to equip them with the skills the jobs demand.

Alas, the book does not deliver all that it promises. The prescription is incomplete and, as Mayer concedes, defenseless before two lines of attack. It would not "fundamentally redistribute the benefits and rewards generated within a society." And it would not equip the nation to "achieve the impossible," arresting developments that some may dislike but that Mayer doubts can be altered in a free society. Sweeping though some of his proposals are—the creation of whole new agencies and levels of government, for example—these essays do not comprehend changes in the content of American life so much as amendments to its procedures. *Today and Tomorrow in America* is the work of a marvelously acute critic, not a political philosopher. Its best passages sketch opportunities missed, wrong turns taken, and simple facts overlooked. At times the analysis turns to polemic, leaving the reader thrilled by the author's dexterity but frustrated by the lack of closure. Yet it is rich with fact and discernment, blessedly impatient with too much that too many take for granted, and downright fun to read.

THE bicentennial fireworks are over, but it is safe to predict that other books will appear resembling these two, blending criticism with remedy, reflection with expectation. At the very least this seems a useful exercise, a pause that refreshes. The nation is quieter now—one hesitates to think what sort of a celebration we would have had if the 200th birthday had come five years ago—but not necessarily more pensive. Boorstin and Mayer are especially welcome, then, not because either has written a timeless contribution to man's knowledge but because both make good sense at this point in our national life. And, not least, because they evoke a mood of thoughtfulness and self-scrutiny one hopes will endure when the sky rockets are forgotten.

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The Effects of Ice on Scotch

How fast a drink of Scotch whisky over rocks loses its flavor depends on the proof of the Scotch and the richness of its blend. These two factors are optimized for "on the rocks" Scotch drinkers in 90-Proof Famous Grouse, a venerable old brand from Scotland only recently introduced to America.

by Allen Mac Kenzie

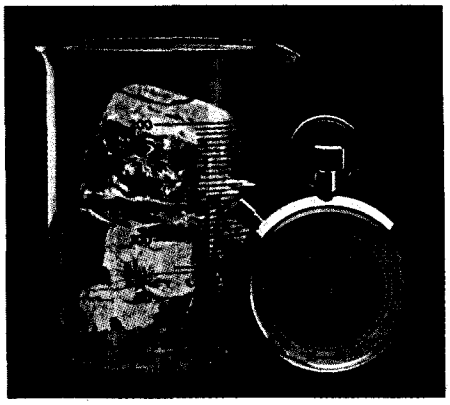
In countries where Scotch has been consumed for centuries, ice and whisky rarely mingle. But on this side of the Atlantic, the picture is quite different. While a small percentage of American Scotch drinkers take it neat, better than 35% drink it "on the rocks." The rest of us add varying amounts of water, club soda, etcetera. And ice. Always plenty of ice —the great American drink requisite.

It would seem then that the American Scotch devotee, particularly our on-the-rocks fancier, has a right to raise a serious question: *Is the Scotch I drink ideally suited to enjoyment over ice?*

Pursuing a Perfect Proof

Let's turn our attention first to the proof at which Scotch whisky is bottled. Consider, if you will, the possibility that there is a better proof for on-the-rocks Scotch drinking than that of your current brand.

Practically every Scotch sold in this country is bottled, at 80, 86, or 86.8 Proof. So at the instant you pour Scotch over ice, it contains between 40% and 43.4% alcohol by volume. (Proof is double the percentage of alcohol.) The chilling effect of the ice is accompanied by dilution. And when your drink has been properly cooled —in 30 seconds to a minute—you achieve what one Scotch connoisseur refers to as "the ideal sip." From then on, the Scotch drinker's enjoyment typically runs downhill, as the drink loses its freshness.



While there is no way to preserve that fresh Scotch flavor indefinitely, we submit that you can sustain the freshness substantially longer with 90-Proof *Famous Grouse*. If you have never heard of this brand, we are not surprised. It is a well established name in Scotland, but only recently introduced to America. So far as we know, *Famous Grouse* is the only Scotch now available in this country at 90 Proof.

How Fast Does the Proof Fall?

To illustrate the merits of a slightly higher proof, we chilled a jigger of Scotch (about 1.7 ounces) with 6 one-inch ice cubes. We measured the amount of water added to the Scotch after each minute and computed the change in proof.

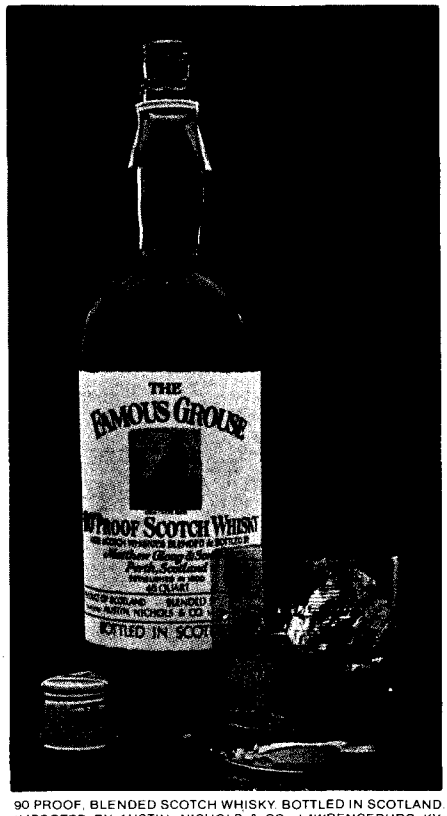
As you might expect, the proof falls rapidly during the first few minutes of cooling, but more slowly after the whisky is chilled. The diagram shows how long it takes Scotches of three different proofs to reach 45 proof when poured over ice. If proof is considered to be a measure of freshness, 90-Proof *Famous Grouse* has a 3½ minute advantage over 86.8-Proof Scotch after 18 minutes on the rocks. (Because it takes 3½ minutes longer to reach 45 proof.) Its advantage over 80-Proof Scotch is 8½ minutes.

Proof, of course, is not the only influence on the flavor of a blended Scotch. The proportion of malt to grain whiskies, origins of the malts, aging methods—these are also important factors determining the relative richness of Scotch flavor.

The makers of *Famous Grouse*—Matthew Gloag & Son of Perth, Scotland —have been producing Scotch in the same family for six generations. And they have performed their most noble feat in the rich blend they created for *Famous Grouse* Scotch. Its flavor—so remarkable at the outset—holds firmly to its character during prolonged contact with ice.

Knowledge of Scotch, however, cannot be indefinitely pursued in the abstract. Your learning process must ultimately include a leisurely sip of *Famous Grouse* on the rocks. For Scotch drinking is one of those pleasures enjoyed most, not in the pursuit, but in the conquest. Scotland's greatest bard, Robert Burns, said it best:

"Gie me a spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire."



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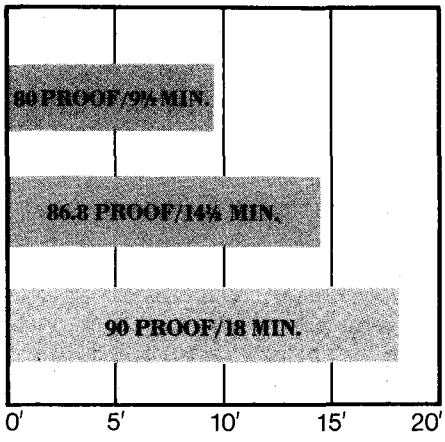

TIME IT TAKES THREE DIFFERENT SCOTCHES TO DILUTE TO 45 PROOF WHEN POURED OVER ICE(IN MINUTES.)

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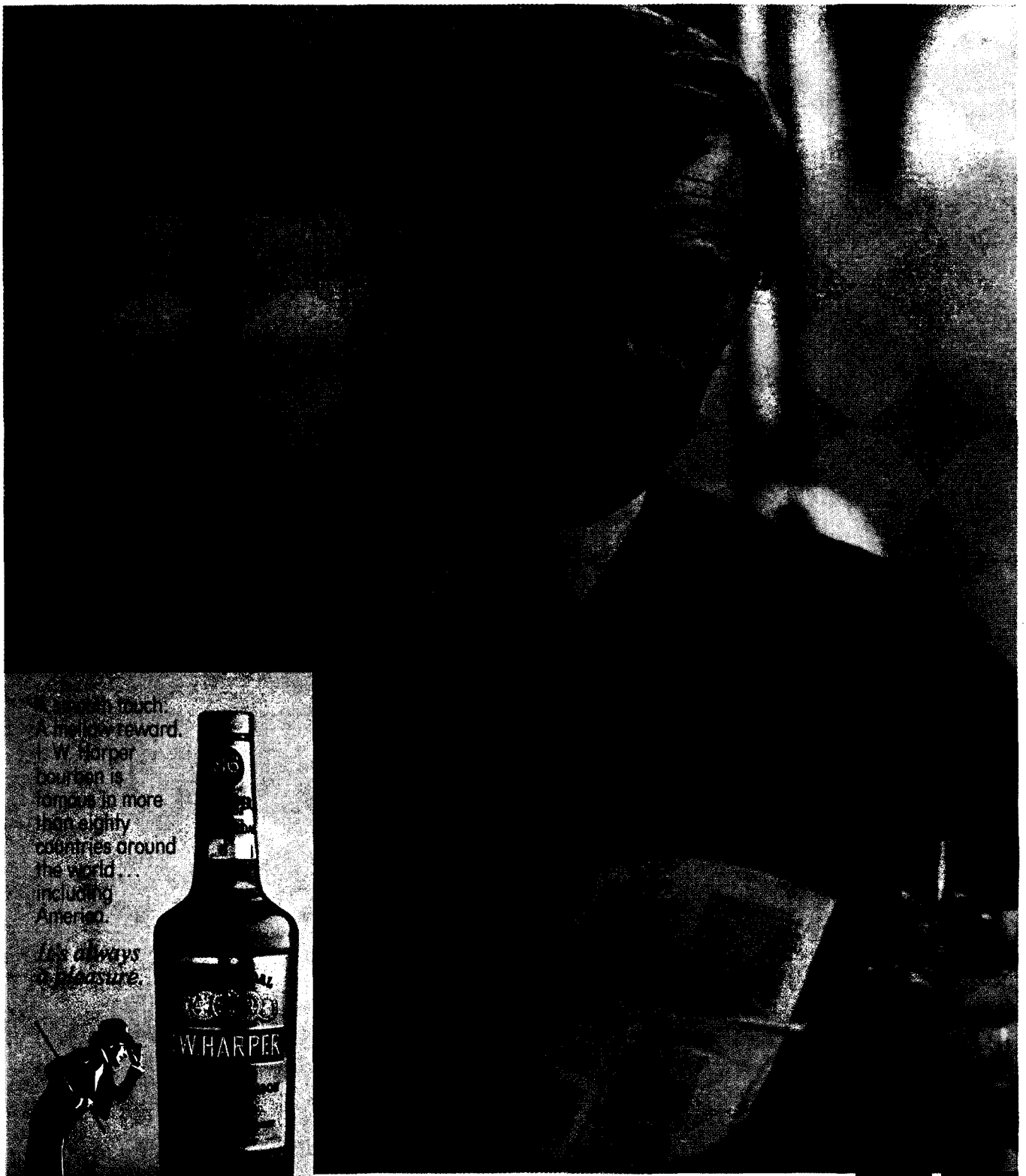

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